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THE
CABINET CYCLOPÆDIA.

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History.

EUROPE
DURING
THE MIDDLE AGES.

VOL. III.

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HISTORY OF EUROPE

((During the))

MIDDLE AGES

VOL. III



H. G. Wood

London

Interview of St. Innes with Ed. B. M.

London

ON LONG FURNITURE, OR THE HISTORY OF THE FURNITURE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

TABLE,

ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL,

TO THE THIRD VOLUME OF

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SECTION II.

GERMANIC EUROPE CONTINUED.

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449—1485.

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TABLE OF KINGS.

TABLE I.

KINGS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON POLYARCHY.

Kent.

Name.	Began to reign.	Name.	Began to reign.
	A. D.		A. D.
Hengist lands -	446—488	Edric. Al. B. 81.	685—694
Esca, or Æric		Wihtréd - -	694—725
succeeds -	488—512	Eadberht - -	725—748
Octa -	512—542	Æthelbyrht -	748—760
Eormenric -	542—560	Edbert Pren -	760
Æthelbyrht -	560—616	Cuthred. Al.	
Eadbald -	616—640	B. 81.	
Ercenberht -	640—664	Baldred	
Echyrht -	664—673	Ealhmund	784—794
Lothar -	673—685	Eadbryht -	794

Suss

Ella lands	- 477	Carteros oblivio mersit.
Scissa		Al. Bev. 82.

* From Mr. Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. p. 435. Mr. Turner's orthography, which is literally Saxon, will not always agree with that in the text of the present volume; but the difference is not material.

Wessex.

Name.	Began to reign. A. D.	Name.	Began to reign. A. D.
Cerdic lands, reigned from		Centwine - -	676—685
519 - -	495—534	Ceadwalla - -	685—688
Cynric - -	534—560	Ina - -	688—728
Ceawlin - -	560—591	Æthelheard - -	728—741
Ceol, or Ceolric	591—597	Cuthred - -	741—754
Ceolwulf - -	597—611	Sigebert - -	754—755
Cynegils - -	611—643	Cynewulf - -	755—784
Cenwalh - -	643—672	Brihric - -	784—800
Sexburh - -	672—674	ECGBRIGHT, or	
Æscwine - -	674—676	Egbert, S. C. 15.	800

Northumbria.

BERNICA.		DEIRA.	
Ida	547—560	Ælla. A. B. 78.	560
Adda - -	560—567		
Clappa - -	567—572	Edwin, expelled	
Heodwulf - -	572—573	by Ethelric - -	590
Freodwulf - -	573—580		
Theodric - -	580—588		
Æthelric - -	588—593		
Æthelfrith - -	593—617		
Eadwin - -	617—634		
Eanfrith - -	634	Osric - -	634—644
Oswald - -	634—642	Oswin - -	644
Oswin - -	642—670		
Ecverth, or Ecg- ferth - -	670—685		
Aldfreth, or Al- fred - -	685—705		
Osred - -	705—716		
Conred - -	716		
Osric			
Ceolwulf - -	731—738		
Edberht - -	738—757		
Osulf - -	757—759		
Moll Æthelwold	759—765		

TABLE OF KINGS.

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Name.	Began to reign.	Name.	Began to reign.
	A. D.		A. D.
Alhred - -	765—774		
Æthelred - -	774—778		
Alfwold - -	778—789		
Osred - -	789—790		
Æthelred - -	790		
Osbold			
Eardwulf - -	795		
Osbert			

Ella

Mercia.

Creoda, or Crida	586	Cenwulf, or Kenulf - -	794
Pibba		Kenelm	
Penda - -	626—655	Ceolwulf - -	819—821
Peada - -	655—656	Beornwulf - -	821
Wulfhere - -	656—675	Ludican	
Æthelred - -	675—704	Wiglaf - -	828
Cenred - -	704—709	Beornwulf	
Ceolred - -	709—716	Buthred. S. C.	
Æthelbald - -	716—755	Ceolwulf. Al.	
Beornred - -	755	Bev. 88.	
Offa - -	755—794		
Egverth - -	794		

East Anglia.

Uffa	Aldulf
Titilus	Beorna
Redwald	Edelred
Eorpwald	Egelbriht
Sigebert	Edmund
Egric	Guthric
Anna	Eohric
Edelhere	EADMUND, slain by Inguar.
Alfwold	

Essex.

Eswyn	Sebbi and Seghere
Sledda	Offa
Sabert	Selred
Sexred and Seward	Swictred
Sigbert Parvus	Sigeric
Sigebert	Sigered
Suithelin	Guthrum. Al. Bev. 85.

TABLE II.

SAXON KINGS WHO, PROPERLY SPEAKING, WERE NOT SOLE
MONARCHS OF ENGLAND.

Name.	Began to reign.	Name.	Began to reign.
	A. D.		A. D.
Egbert - -	800—836	Ethelred I. -	866—871
Ethelwulf -	836—856	Alfred the Great	871—901
Ethelbald -	856—860	Edward the Elder	901—924
Ethelbert -	860—866		

TABLE III.

SAXON AND DANISH KINGS WHO WERE SOLE MONARCHS OF
ENGLAND.

Athelstan - -	924—940	Edmund Iron-	
Edmund I. -	940—946	side - -	1016
Edred - -	946—955	Canute the Great	1016—1035
Edwy - -	955—959	Harold Hare-	
Edgar - -	959—975	foot - -	1035—1040
Edward the		Hardecanute -	1040—1042
Martyr - -	975—978	Edward the Con-	
Ethelred II. -	978—1016	fessor - -	1042—1066

TABLE IV.

NORMAN LINE.

William I. -	1066—1087	Henry I. (Beau-	
William II.		clerc) - -	1100—1135
(Rufus) -	1087—1100	Stephen - -	1135—1154

TABLE V.

HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET.

Henry II.	1154—1189	Edward I. -	1272—1307
Richard I.	1189—1199	Edward II. -	1307—1327
John -	1199—1216	Edward III. -	1327—1377
Henry III.	1216—1272	Richard II. -	1377—1399

TABLE VI.

HOUSE OF LANCASTER.

Name.	Began to reign. A. D.	Name.	Began to reign. A. D.
Henry IV.	- 1399—1413	Henry VI.	- 1422—1461
Henry V.	- 1413—1422		

TABLE VII.

HOUSE OF YORK.

Edward IV.	- 1461—1483	Richard III.	- 1483—1485
Edward V.	- 1483		

ERRATUM.

Vol. I. p. 177. for “ Dr. Lingard.” read “ Dr. Milner.”

EUROPE
DURING
THE MIDDLE AGES.

SECTION II.

GERMANIC EUROPE — *continued.*

BOOK II.

ENGLAND.

CHAP. I.

POLITICAL AND CIVIL HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

449—1485.

I. THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD. — INVASION OF THE SAXONS. — ESTABLISHMENT OF THEIR KINGDOMS — THEIR ULTIMATE ABSORPTION INTO THAT OF WESSEX. — GOVERNMENT, LAWS, SOCIETY, ETC. OF THE SAXONS. — II. THE NORMAN INVASION. — CHIEF REVOLUTIONS OF ENGLISH HISTORY UNDER THE NORMAN AND PLANTAGENET HOUSES. — HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION AT THIS PERIOD. — HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK. — THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION RESUMED.

I. *The Anglo-Saxon Period.*

I. HISTORIC SUMMARY. — THE state of Britain at the 449. time of the Saxon invasion was not such as to hold out the prospect of successful defence against any considerable hostile force. 1. The most vigorous arms of the country

had been withered in the wars of Gaul, no less than in the incessant struggles with the Picts ; and it was, consequently, left with few natural defenders. 2. Those who remained had greatly declined from the ancient discipline ; and though they were brave, they had little confidence in their own ill-directed efforts. 3. Even if their defenders had been both better disciplined and more numerous, their own jealousies, their perpetual civil broils, would have prevented them from combining on a sufficient scale to arrest the progress of enemies obedient to one common will. Like all barbaric nations, the Britons, though kindred in descent, were split into many independent tribes, each with a local settlement, with distinct government and interests. Such Cæsar found them some years before the Christian era ; such they were again become after the Romans were compelled to abandon the island. From several incidental passages in the historians of the empire, it seems certain that, even in the interval — the period of the Roman domination — the ancient race of the kings was still invested with a subordinate jurisdiction: we more than once, during the most flourishing times of that period, read of native tributary princes. In fact, there were probably some who were but nominally dependent ; a few, perhaps, who disdained even the semblance of subjection. If we should reject the ancient traditions of the Welsh, which assert that neither the race nor the power of their princes ever sustained interruption, we should yet have no difficulty in believing that the strong-holds of that principality might bid defiance to the cumbrous masses of Roman infantry ; such masses would speedily be broken by the means which, in a rocky, mountainous country, nature provides for the defence of the native warrior. But if this region were thus secure, the case was different in regard to the rest of the island, which, owing to the three causes we have enumerated, was sure to fall a prey to the invaders. Other causes had, doubtless, their share. Early in the fifth century, the inhabitants are said first to have been enervated by luxury, next thinned

by the plague : from the complaints, however declamatory, of Gildas, it is certain that they no longer possessed the qualities necessary for a successful resistance ; that their attachments were local ; that their rulers were incessantly at war with one another ; that they had no patriotism, in the proper sense of the word — even no moral virtue. Christianity had, indeed, been established among them from the second century at least, perhaps even from the first ; but from the same Gildas, — himself a Briton, — we read that it had little influence over the people, who were infected with vices, worse if possible than those of pagans. Under the Romans there had been thirty civitates or governments, which, under the denomination of *municipia*, *coloniae*, *Latio jure donatae*, and *stipendiariae*, had formed so many important agglomerations of population : after the retirement of the Romans, the same places subsisted, but wholly independent of each other. Most of them at first were, doubtless, governed by vicarii, consulares, and præsides ; but in a few years we find this popular government subverted : instead of vicars, we perceive a number of chiefs, nearly all of British extraction, who, under the pompous title of kings, made war incessantly on one another. Now, these chiefs are represented, no doubt truly, as so many tyrants, regardless of all obligations, and anxious only, by violence or perfidy, to continue their course of excesses. None, says the most ancient historian of the Britons, obtained or were appointed to the dignity, but such as excelled their fellows in wickedness. Their career, however, was generally short ; they were conquered by a more powerful neighbour, or they were put to death by their own people, but “ not from any examination of justice ;” and they were succeeded by others still more ferocious. Their number was perpetually varying, but it was always considerable. Besides Wales, which had several, Cornwall, Devonshire, Kent, Glastonbury, had each one ; there were some in Deira, Bernicia, Cumbria, South Scotland, and in other places un-

noticed by the obscure records of the times. Hence it is that St. Jerome terms Britain "*provincia fertilis tyrannorum*," and that Gildas heaps on them such lavish vituperation. One the latter calls "the tyrannical cub of the Devonshire lioness;" another, "the pard in colour and morals, though with a hoary head;" a third, "the stupid tyrant of South Wales;" a fourth, "the yellow bull-dog;" a fifth, "the dragon of Britain." Nor does he draw a more favourable picture of the people. He says that their cowardice in war, their perfidy in peace, were become proverbial; that they were bold only in crimes and falsehood; that they recognised no distinction between good and bad actions, except, indeed, that they preferred the latter; that they were guilty of every possible species of vice; and that the clergy were just like the laity. Such sweeping censures, though the fact itself is always proved by the exaggeration, must yet be received with caution. That the people were infected by all the vices of Rome in the most vicious period of the empire, may readily be admitted; but if they were perfidious, they were not cowardly, for a coward does not delight in civil war. That, from their mutual jealousies, divisions, hatred, they could not be brought to co-operate, and that, if they could, they would have had no confidence in themselves, is certain. Hence they presented a feeble opposition to their enemies—the Picts, the Scots, and the piratical Saxons. Yet the Picts were but a handful of half-naked barbarians, whom tradition, as noticed by Bede *, had brought from Scythia, that is, from north-

* "In primis autem hæc insula *Brittones* solum a quibus nomen accepti, incolæ habuit, quide tractu *Armoricano*, ut fertur, *Britanniam* advecti, australes sibi partes illius vindicarunt. Et cum plurimam insulæ partem, incipientes ab austro, possidissent, contigit gentem *Pictorum* de *Scythia*, ut perhibetur, longis navibus non multis oceanum ingressam, circumagente, flatu ventorum, extra fines omnes *Britanniæ* *Hiberniam* pervenisse," &c. — *Beda*, lib. i. cap. 1. The Scots, however, who inhabited Ireland, told the strangers that the country was unable to support both, and exhorted them to steer for Caledonia, where they settled. Subsequently a multitude of Scots themselves followed the example, and established themselves in the highlands and islands. — *Ibid.* From what country the Picts came, is likely to continue a puzzle to the learned. Their language was distinct from those of Britain and Gaul.

ern Europe, into Caledonia, at a period probably prior to the Christian era; they could have done little without the aid of the Scots, who originally migrated from Ireland to the highlands of North Britain. Had the British tribes acted in concert, they would have been too formidable even for the combined assaults of the barbarians; but, alienated by their own dissensions, they watched with indifference the successive defeat of their tribes, until the existence of all was menaced. Then it was that they applied for aid to their former masters, the Romans; but though that aid was granted them once, it was subsequently refused, and they were exhorted to depend on their own resources. They did, indeed, choose a supreme sovereign, — one who should lead the native kings to battle, — and this was a restoration of the ancient policy, which we know obtained when Cæsar landed on the coast. As formerly Cassivellan, so now Vortigern, held this supreme dignity. But Vortigern, even if his personal qualities had been as excellent as we are informed they were worthless, could never have combined into one compact whole such discordant materials. His cruelty, however, revolted his countrymen. In this crisis, as the Picts and Scots were approaching nearer and nearer, he, with the advice of his royal allies, resolved to do for Britain what the Cæsars in similar cases had done for the empire — to oppose one barbarian force by another. At that very time three Saxon cyules, or long vessels, filled with the pirates of that nation, were cruising in the Channel: the brother chiefs, Hengist and Horsa, descended, we are told, from the royal race of Odin, were solicited to assist in the expulsion of the northern invaders; the food, clothing, and money, which were held out as inducements, easily ensured their compliance.*

These savage allies, whose numbers were multiplied ^{to} 449

* Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, cap. 1—23.; necnon *Epistola ejus*, 586. p. 18—39. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. i. cap. 1—15. passim. Nennius, *Historia Britonum*, cap. 14—23. *Chronicon Saxonicum*, p. 9—12. *Chronicon Fani S. Neoti*, sive *Annales Johannis Asserii*, p. 141—143. Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. i. books i. and ii.

by continued reinforcements, served Vortigern with fidelity, during six years, by freeing the country both from the piratical Scots, — or, as we may now begin to term them, Irish, — and from the Picts. But it was a country on which they had long cast an eye, on which they had often attempted to make an impression, and which they were resolved not to abandon. In comparison with the region they had left, its soil was fertile, its climate was genial; nor were they slow in discovering that, if they had been powerful enough to expel an invader, whom the Britons had resisted in vain, they might well hope to retain their footing in the island. To ensure their success, however, they allured great numbers of their pagan brethren to their assistance; and they entered into an alliance with the Picts, — the very people whom they had been hired to fight.* The first struggle between the Saxons and the Britons was on the banks of the Medway; in it Hengist lost his brother, Vortigern a son; but it was evidently in favour of the pagans. The subsequent successes of Hengist and his Jutes are sufficiently proved by the fact, that in a very few years (in 457) he was master of Kent; nor could all the efforts of the Britons wrest that fertile county from his grasp. Whether, as is affirmed by writers some centuries afterwards, he carried his arms into other counties, is, at best, uncertain. All that we assuredly know, is, that he was the founder of the first Saxon kingdom — that of *Kent* — which subsisted under eighteen successive sovereigns, until the close of the eighth century. The example of this successful adventurer could not fail to be followed; indeed, as the Britons, during one hundred and fifty years, never ceased to struggle for their homes, Hengist was eager enough to attract his pagan countrymen into the same field, and to divide the

* We reject the story of Rowena, daughter of Hengist, with whom Vortigern is said to have fallen in love, and for whose sake she surrendered Kent to her father. It contains nothing, perhaps, very improbable in itself; but no traces are to be found of this, and other romantic incidents, in Gildas or Bede. Nennius is the first writer who mentions them; but he lived four hundred years after the time, and his narrative is evidently founded on the traditions of the vulgar.

forces of the British prince. In 477, Ella, another Saxon chief, landed in *Sussex*, and founded the kingdom of that name, which was not destined, however, to play any conspicuous part in the great drama of the polyarchy; of its princes, beyond Ella and his successor, no record remains. A far more powerful state than both combined, was that of *Wessex*, founded by Cerdic, in 519, after twenty-four years of arduous contests with the Britons. On these conflicts, however, history is almost silent, though romance is diffuse enough. We learn that he was assisted by his brother chiefs of Kent and Sussex, and that he defeated the Britons in several great engagements. His son Cynric, who succeeded in 534, extended the new state; but Cealwin, the third king (560—591), far surpassed both. Cerdic had gained little more than Hampshire: Cynric had won Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire: Cealwin added Gloucestershire and part of Somersetshire; but not until, in several great battles, he had dissipated the combined forces of the natives. (Some other conquests, however, were subsequently wrested from the West Saxon kings by the sovereigns of Mercia, the last kingdom established by the Germanic adventurers.) Still by far the most considerable portion of the island was in the hands of the Britons, who had kings in Cornwall, Devonshire, Wales, and in the whole of the country north of the new state of Wessex. Perhaps, as the British historians relate, the reason of the slow progress of the Saxon arms, from the foundation of the Kentish kingdom to the year 530, was the strenuous resistance of Arthur, their favourite hero. Unfortunately for his fame, his real deeds have been so monstrously exaggerated — so much of wild romance has been interwoven into the web of his fate — as to provoke a doubt of his very existence. But that doubt would be an injustice to a great patriot; for though he is not mentioned by any historian prior to Nennius, the authority of that writer, and the concurrent voice of Welsh history,

poetry, and tradition, would suffice to establish the fact. The exaggerations as to his success, may easily be inferred from the foundation of the third Saxon kingdom of Essex, — an event which he was unable to avert. — While Cerdic was warring with the natives, a new colony of Saxons arrived from Sleswick, landed on the eastern coast, and, in 530, founded the kingdom of *Essex*, which was eventually extended so as to embrace Middlesex and London. This kingdom, however, was not doomed to exercise much influence in the affairs of the polyarchy: the names of its princes but incidentally appear, in connection with the more powerful states. A far more formidable invasion was witnessed by the British princes north of the Humber. In 547, Ida, another reputed descendant of Odin, accompanied by twelve sons, and by a number of Angles sufficient to fill forty vessels, landed in Bernicia. *Bernicia* was the more northern of the two kingdoms on this coast: it extended from the Tees to the Frith of Forth; while *Deira*, the more southern, was bounded by that river and the Humber.* Ida founded the kingdom of Bernicia, while one of his chiefs, in 560, called into existence that of Deira. These conquests, too, appear to have been made with difficulty, and slowly: for many years elapsed before these regions were wholly cleared of their native princes. Deira had seldom a separate existence: it could not support its independence against the more powerful sovereigns of Bernicia, who generally ruled over both, under the title of kings of *Northumbria*. — The exact origin of the *East Anglian* state is not known: we only infer, that about the middle of the same century it was founded by Uffa, with his Angles; and that it since became powerful enough not only to oppose the Britons, but to despatch an expedition against a German tribe. Another kingdom

* There were, besides, smaller British principalities dispersed throughout the extensive tract lying between the Mersey and the Humber on one side, and the Clyde with the Frith of Forth on the other. It is time to investigate the ancient history of those counties: the Welsh and Scandinavian archives would throw great light on the subject.

— that of *Mercia* — was formed in 586 by the Angles, headed by Cridda, one of the chiefs who had assisted in the conquest of Deira. Mercia was at first dependent on Deira; but eventually it became, next to Wessex, the most powerful of the polyarchy. Thus, in about a century and a half eight kingdoms were established in Britain; but as Deira and Bernicia were generally under the same sceptre, they are usually termed seven. It is interesting to contemplate the progressive location of the continental tribes. First the Jutes established themselves in Kent, the Isle of Wight, and the southern part of Hampshire. Next the Saxons, properly so called, formed three successive kingdoms; the South Saxons gave their name to Sussex, and their kingdom comprised only the county of that name; the West Saxons, who gave their name to Wessex, occupied successively Hampshire (except the part possessed by the Jutes), Surrey, Berks, Oxfordshire, Wilts, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall; and the East Saxons, who founded Essex, possessed, besides that county, Middlesex, and the southern part of Hertfordshire. Next the Angles gave rise to three kingdoms. 1. Northumbria, which appears to have been the first state founded by them, comprehending Bernicia and Deira, stretching from the Humber and the Mersey to the Clyde and the Forth. 2. East Anglia, which comprehended Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, the Isle of Ely, probably also a part of Bedfordshire. 3. Mercia, which contained all the counties from the Thames and the Severn in the south, to the Mersey and the Humber in the north: the inhabitants of Leicestershire, who of course belonged to this state, were generally denominated Middle Angles, from their central position; just as those of another county (Middlesex) were, for the same reason, called Middle Saxons. It must not, however, be supposed that the limits of these states were invariable: those, at least, of Wessex and Mercia often changed, through the interminable wars which, after the subjugation of the Britons, afflicted all

the kingdoms of the polyarchy. The length of time which elapsed from the establishment of the first to that of the last of these states, is exceedingly honourable to the bravery of the British: in fact, they were the only people included in the pale of the Roman empire who made a vigorous and continued stand for their independence. Italy, except some Greek fortresses, soon fell before the Ostrogoths and the Lombards: Spain does not appear to have even meditated resistance to the Visigoths and the other barbaric tribes which assailed her: Gaul was slavishly quiescent; for as to Armorica, which valiantly resisted, it was peopled by colonies from Britain, who fled from the yoke of the foreigners. Cæsar himself gained little glory in this island; Hengist, Ida, and other chiefs, would have gained still less, had the native tribes been brought to co-operate in the common defence. Even as it was, Wales escaped the yoke; and there is reason to believe, that neither in Cornwall, nor in Cumberland, was the Saxon sway established until the tenth century.*

586 No sooner were the Saxons established in their
to respective states, than, seeing no common enemy to
836. oppose them, they turned their arms against each other. No one will expect us, within limits so circumscribed, to enter into a detail of the interminable wars which followed, considering that the ungrateful labour has been eluded by historians, and these the most voluminous, whose pens have been expressly devoted to the subject. The results, however, are necessary to be known, before the foundation of the English monarchy can be understood. In those wars, Kent, Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia were too small in territory to take much part: they appear sometimes as the allies, oftener as the vassals, of the other three great powers, — Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria. Among the princes of these dynasties there was one distinguished above all the rest,

* Authorities: — Gildas, *De Excidio Britannie*; necnon *Epistola ejus*, passim. Nennius, *Historia Britonum*, cap. 28—45. p. 105—115. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. i. cap. 15—34. *Chronicon Fani S. Neoti*, p. 143—147. *Chronicon Saxonicum* (sub annis).

as the Bretwalda, the wielder or sovereign of Britain ; nor was the dignity confined to the monarchs of any particular state. But what was the nature of his authority ? by whom was he appointed ? These questions have not been answered. Whether he attained it through the suffrage of his brother chiefs, or in virtue of his descent, or from his personal character ; whether, having obtained it, he had increased duties or prerogatives connected with it ; would, perhaps, be vain to enquire. From the seven princes, however, who bore the title, we may hazard a conjecture that it was elective ; that it was not wholly a personal distinction ; that there was some degree of real advantage attached to it.* Ella, king of Sussex, was the first who held it ; the second was Ceawlin, king of Wessex, a century after Ella : why the latter, the most powerful and victorious prince of Britain, was thus honoured, is not so difficult to conjecture ; but that the former, who ruled over the most insignificant of the states, should be equally so, is unaccountable. What not a little adds to the confusion of ideas on this subject is the fact that Ethelbert, the fourth king of Kent, disputed the possession of the dignity with Ceawlin, on the ground that it belonged to him of right, as the representative of Hengist. If so, why should Ella have ever had it ? and why not one of the immediate descendants of Hengist ? Yet there must have been some pretension for the claim ; for though not one of the Kentish sovereigns before Ethelbert had been recognised as Bretwalda, not one of them had been under the influence of that dignity, — the only exemption we read

* “ Qui (Ethelbert) tertius quidem is regibus gentis Anglorum, cunctis australibus eorum provinciis quæ Humbræ fluvio et contiguis ei terminis sequestrabantur à borealibus, *imperavit*. Nam primus imperium hujusmodi Aelli rex Australium Saxonum ; secundus, Caelin rex Occidentalium Saxonum ; tertius, ut dixi, Aedilberet rex Cantuariorum ; quartus, Redwald rex Orientalium Anglorum, *qui etiam vivente Aedilbereto eidem genti ducatum præbebat, obtinuit* ; quintus, Aeduin rex Nordanhymbrorum gentis — *majoræ potentia cunctis qui Britanniam incolunt, Anglorum pariter et Brittonum populis præfuit, præter Cantuariis tantum.*” The sixth and seventh were Oswald and Oswin, kings of Northumbria. — *Bede, Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. 5. We think the dignity was purely military.

being in favour of them.* Whatever may have been the nature of this pre-eminence, Ethelbert raised an army to snatch it from the grasp of Ceawlin, but was signally defeated at Wimbledon. The kingdom of Kent now lay at the mercy of Ceawlin, yet he forbore to press his advantage, but turned his arms against the Britons. On his death, however (593), Ethelbert obtained the object of his ambition, and was the third Bretwalda. To his reign we shall revert in the chapter on the religion of England.—Redwald, king of the East Angles, was the fourth Bretwalda. His reign was prosperous; and that he was not destitute of generosity appears from his protection of Edwin, the exiled prince of Deira. On the death of Ella, founder of that kingdom, who left an infant named Edwin, the crown was usurped by Edilfrid, son-in-law of Ella. The child was removed from his reach, and intrusted to the care of Cadvan, the British king of North Wales. Edilfrid, resolving to punish the royal Briton for protecting the interests of a rival, invaded Wales, wasted the country, and massacred the monks of Bangor; but Edwin, now grown up, had the good fortune to escape, and to reach the court of Redwald. Redwald was now allured by promises, now assailed by threats, to surrender the fugitive prince; but, after a struggle, to the nature of which we shall revert in the ensuing chapter, the better feeling triumphed, and he resolved to protect the orphan. He armed, defeated Edilfrid, who fell in battle, and placed his friend (616) on the throne of Northumbria. It was probably on the death of Redwald, that Edwin assumed the dignity of Bretwalda, which from this time to the reign of Egbert appears to have been annexed to the Northumbrian crown. This was the second Christian sovereign of the polyarchy; and he was more powerful than his predecessors; he was the protector of Eorpwald, the successor of his benefactor Redwald; as Bretwalda he was the

* He ruled over all the states of the Britons and the Angles, "*præter Cantuariis tantum.*"

acknowledged head of the Saxon states; the British kings are said to have been his tributaries; even Man and Anglesey were incorporated with his dominions. But his glory was envied by Penda, king of Mercia, who, we are told, aspired to the dignity of Bretwalda. Joining his arms with those of the king of North Wales, whom Edwin had humbled, and from whom Anglesey and Man had been wrested, he invaded Yorkshire, and a battle was fought, fatal to the life of Edwin. While his ally Cadwallon ravaged Northumbria, this fierce pagan invaded East Anglia — probably out of hatred to the religion which, like the Northumbrians, the inhabitants had embraced — overthrew the army raised to oppose him, the East Anglian king falling in the battle, and annexed the country to the crown of Mercia. He did not, however, attain the dignity of Bretwalda; for though his ally triumphed in Deira and Bernicia, which after Edwin's death obeyed two separate princes, and though these princes fell, the one in battle, the other by treachery, another prince, St. Oswald, remained, who annihilated the army of Cadwallon. After this exploit, Oswald, now king of all Northumbria, was hailed as the sixth Bretwalda. Edwin had introduced the gospel into that kingdom; he extended it, and rendered it the predominant religion: he it was who conferred the island of Lindisfarne on St. Aidan, the first bishop, and he assisted in the introduction of Christianity into Wessex. But the fate of Edwin awaited him; in 642 he was defeated and slain by Penda. After an unsuccessful attempt on Bamborough, the victor, in the winter, retreated, and Oswio, brother of St. Oswald, was raised to the throne of Northumbria, and the dignity of Bretwalda. He was the seventh and last prince who held that pre-eminence. Northumbria had been weakened by the recent wars; it continued to decline under his reign; for six years he was compelled to cede Deira to Oswio, a rival prince of the house of Ella; and though he subsequently dethroned his rival; though he defeated and slew the dreaded Penda; though he overran Mercia

and East Anglia, which he joined under his sceptre, and introduced Christianity into the former kingdom, there was more splendour than real advantage in his exploits. His battles enfeebled his kingdom ; his successes were transient ; Mercia recovered its independence ; his own son Alchfrid rebelled ; he was compelled to resign Deira to that undutiful prince ; and the plague fearfully thinned his subjects, as it did those of the other kings of Britain. On his death in 670 he had the mortification to see Wessex and Mercia rapidly increased in power. His successor Elfrid indeed maintained for a time the imposing attitude of superiority ; but after the death of that prince in a battle with the Picts, the kingdom had few intervals of tranquillity. Its princes succeeded one another with such rapidity, — many were dethroned, many retired to the cloister, — that we can hardly trace their existence. The mischiefs of civil strife were aggravated by the descents of the Danes, who towards the close of the eighth century commenced their terrific depredations in this kingdom, and soon extended them to the rest of the polyarchy. In the space of a century, viz. from 705 to 809, the blood-stained sceptre of Northumbria was grasped by fourteen princes, of whom one only, if one, died in possession of royalty. Seven were slain ; six were dethroned, and the fate of one is unknown. The same scenes of perfidy and blood, — scenes which made Charlemagne declare that the Northumbrians were worse than the very pagans, — the same anarchy, continued until 867, when the dynasty was for ever subverted by the Danes. — While this kingdom was thus declining, Mercia was doomed to have its alternations of success and disaster, until it, like all the states south of the Humber, was absorbed by the enlarged sphere of Wessex. From Wulphere, who ascended the throne after the death of Peada, the son of Penda (Peada was the first Christian sovereign of Mercia), to Ceolwulf, the sceptre was grasped by sixteen princes. If the earlier ones effectually threw off the yoke of Northumbria ; if Ethelbald (716 — 755) established

his superiority over all the tribes from the Humber to the Isle of Wight ; if Offa (755—794) overthrew the armies of Sussex, Kent, Wessex, and the British state of Powis, and annexed East Anglia to Mercia ; the country was evidently weakened by wars and civil disturbances, until Wiglaf (828) was constrained to bend under the yoke of Egbert king of Wessex.—Wessex is the state which, above all others, demands the attention of the reader, since it absorbed all the rest, and was the cradle of the English monarchy. The reign of Ceolric, successor of the famous Ceawlin, the second Bretwalda, was short, and not very remarkable ; but Ceolwulf (597—611) made Wessex to be feared by all his neighbours, Saxon and British. Cynegils and Cuichelm, (611—642) his sons, who reigned conjointly, and were the first Christian sovereigns of the state, were strong enough to resist the fierce Penda, and to maintain its superiority unto their deaths. The sceptre of Cenwalch (642—672) son of Cynegils, was not wielded with equal glory : venturing to dismiss his consort, the sister of Penda, he was expelled from the kingdom by that valiant chief, and compelled to seek shelter in East Anglia ; and though he was subsequently restored, he yet sustained reverses in the wars with Wulfhere, the son of Penda. Ceadwalla (686—688) humbled Kent and Sussex, which he reduced to a dependance on his crown. He was the first Christian sovereign of Wessex, and his conversion was doubtless owing to the exhortations of his friend St. Wilfrid. Disdaining, however, to be baptised by a meaner hand, he passed to Rome, where he received the sacred rite from pope Sergius, and where he died, a neophyte. Ina, the next successor (688—728), was a much greater prince. He was as valiant as any of his contemporaries ; Essex was even incorporated with his dominions ; and that he was superior to them in ability, may be inferred both from the general tenour of his administration, and from the laws which he drew up for the government of his people. To these laws we shall revert in the next chapter. After

a long and able reign, he resigned the crown in a general assembly, and retired with his consort to Rome, where he ended his days in prayer and penance. In the reign of his four successors the power of the state was impaired, and Mercia held the superiority. One, and indeed the chief, cause of this decline was the elective nature of the West Saxon government: though in all the other kingdoms it partook of the same character, yet there was combined with it much more of hereditary right: in them the eldest son was almost invariably preferred, while in Wessex the strict order of succession was often disregarded, the brother, or nephew, or younger son, being substituted for the true heir. In this state of things contentions for the crown were inevitable, and they led to their natural result, — the degradation of the kingdom. A brighter scene arose with *Egbert* (800—836), the last scion of the house of Cerdic, who is the true founder of the English monarchy. This prince had been forced to exile himself, and at the court of Charlemagne had learned more comprehensive views than that of Wessex could have taught him. His first and last object was the concentration of the sovereign power. The British princes he reduced to a tributary state, making his banners to float even on the shores of Anglesey. He next measured his strength with Mercia, on which his people had many wrongs to revenge, and which, under its late kings, had rapidly declined. In 823, he overthrew Beornwulf, the reigning sovereign: he next incorporated Essex more closely with his crown; reduced Kent to the same situation, and rendered Wiglaf of Mercia and East Anglia his vassal. As Sussex had before been united with Wessex, he was now lord of the whole kingdom south of the Humber and the Mersey: hence he is distinguished by some as the eighth Bretwalda, by others, as the first monarch of England. It is, however, certain, that he never assumed so ambitious a title; that he never styled himself other than king of the West Saxons; that his power was not superior to that of some pre-

ceding Bretwaldas ; and that, though he unquestionably laid the foundation stone of the monarchy, he can in no wise be ranked among the kings of England. In his last years he was much annoyed by the devastations of the Danes : they once defeated his army ; but the year before his death he inflicted on them a signal revenge, and forced the remainder precipitately to regain their ships.*

From the preceding sketch, it is evident that the 836 foundation of monarchy was the event rather of accident to than of policy. The predecessors of Egbert had no 871. ambition beyond humbling an obnoxious rival ; and so little did they dream of futurity, that with their own hands they destroyed whatever they had erected. Three of the states, as we have before observed, wielded the resources of the nation. One of them, Northumbria, ruined itself by a succession of the most bloody, unnatural, civil wars. The struggle, therefore, for the superiority afterwards lay between Mercia and Wessex. Of these, the former seemed best adapted by its position and by the abilities of its early princes, to win the ultimate triumph ; but the troubles to which it eventually became a prey, and the feebleness of its sovereigns, hastened its decline, while Wessex successively weakened and incorporated within itself the kingdoms of Sussex, Essex, and Kent. Even yet, had an able prince wielded the resources of Mercia after the death of Offa, the sceptre of England would probably have passed to him. But from 794 to about 830, the crown was disputed and worn by about ten ambitious claimants ; and in the weakness consequent on their struggles, Egbert, who cautiously watched the progress of events, became strong enough to subdue the country, especially with the aid of the East Angles, who were never well affected to the sway of Mercia. But *Ethelwulf*, the successor of Eg-

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. ii. iii. iv. v. (in multis capitulis). *Chronicon Saxonicum* (sub annis). *Chronicon Fani S. Neoti*, p. 147—155. *Ranulphus Higdensis Monachus Chestrensis, Polychronicon*, lib. v. p. 226—253. *Chronica de Mailros*, p. 135, &c. *Eddius, Vita S. Wilfridi* (passim). *Wallingford, Chronica*, p. 525, &c.

bert (836—856) was unable to tread in the steps of his politic father. In his precautions against the Danes, indeed, he deserved the gratitude of his people: he it was who appointed an officer to each maritime district, so that, land wherever they might, a force was soon raised to oppose them. In his general administration, too, there was little to condemn; though the praise must chiefly be awarded to his experienced, able minister, the bishop of Sherburn. But his reign was disastrous; he himself was once defeated by the enemy; and he had the mortification to see Canterbury and London sacked by them. Yet in the end he triumphed, and inflicted so severe a blow on them, that they respected his dominions during the remainder of his reign. Ethelwulf is famed for his bounty towards the church: he it was who, with the consent of his thanes, published the celebrated charter, which exempted the possessions of the church from the services of the state. This was most injudicious; and his journey to Rome, dictated by a mistaken piety, was scarcely less so. During his absence; Ethelbald his eldest son rebelled; and though on his return the nation generally inclined towards him, to spare the effusion of blood, he ceded Wessex to that undutiful prince. In his last will he left Kent, with Essex and Surrey, to his second son Ethelbert, and Wessex to his three other sons, in the order of seniority, *Ethelbald*, Ethelred, and Alfred. The first reigned two years only, when *Ethelbert* of Kent seized the crown, to the prejudice of Ethelred. His reign is chiefly memorable for the death of Ragnar Lodbrog, the famous Danish pirate, who, after unequalled successes on the coasts of Scotland, Ireland, and France, had the mortification to see his ships stranded off that of Northumbria, and himself taken prisoner. Such a foe, who had shed human blood as carelessly as if it had been water, was not likely to meet with much mercy. By Osbert and Ella, two Northumbrian chiefs then contending for the regal dignity, he was put to death — we are told, by the sting of serpents. That his end was horrible,

may be inferred from his consolatory predictions that the cubs of the boar would soon avenge the fate of their parent.* No sooner, indeed, did his sons, Inguar and Ubbo, hear of his death, than they assembled a formidable fleet, and, with 20,000 warriors, sailed towards England. They landed on the coast of East Anglia, just after the accession of *Ethelred* (866—871). Now commenced a career of devastations, compared with which those of the Saxons sink into insignificance. Having penetrated to York, they signally overthrew the two Northumbrian chiefs; one fell in battle, the other they put to a horrid death; and the victory gave them possession of the province, over which they placed a vassal king. Leaving one division of their army to preserve the submission of the country, and to till the ground, another passed the Humber, laid waste Lincolnshire, burnt every church and monastery they approached, and put all the inmates, without distinction of age or sex, to the sword. During the whole of the summer, no effort was made by the Saxon kings to resist them: they penetrated into Mercia, marking their course with blood and smoking ruins; returned into East Anglia, the army and king of which they annihilated. Amidst these scenes Ubba fell; but Gothrun, another son of Ragnar, assumed the crown of East Anglia; while the others, Halfdan and Bakseg, penetrated into Berkshire, and Inguar returned to his associates in the north. As reinforcements were continually reaching the barbarians, and as in valour they were greatly superior to the Saxons, they could thus divide their forces with impunity. Ethelred and Alfred now hastened to oppose them; in the first battle the Danes lost Bakseg, with several other chiefs; in the second they were victorious, and Ethelred received a mortal wound.†

* We distrust this popular story.

† *Chronicon Saxonum* (sub annis). *Ranulphus Higdenus, Polychronicon*, p. 253, &c. *Wilhelmus Malmsburiensis, De Regibus*, passim. *Wallingford, Chronica*, p. 531, &c. *Ingulphus Croylandensis, Historia*, p. 11—25. *Chronicon de Mailros*, p. 141—143. *Asserius Menevensis, Vita Aelfredi*, 1—24. *Chronicon S. Neoti*, 155—159.

871 By the death of Ethelred, *Alfred*, to whom posterity
to has assigned the epithet of Great, was called to the
901. throne. For the sake of clearness we shall consider this
personage in a threefold light ; — in his warfare with
the Danes—in his internal administration— in his per-
sonal character. 1. That Alfred succeeded at a most
critical period, when a considerable portion of his king-
dom was already in possession of the northern adventur-
ers, and the subjugation of the rest menaced, is certain.
His accession was hailed with delight ; he had always been
the favourite of the people ; while on a pilgrimage to
Rome he had been anointed by the pope ; during the
reign of his brothers he had held a government, with the
royal title ; his literary acquirements, especially his
historical studies, had, in popular estimation, well fitted
him for the duties of his more exalted station ; and his
bias towards piety was generally acknowledged. Yet,
with all these advantages he disappointed the expecta-
tions of his people ; who found that his shoulders were
lamentably unequal to the burden he had assumed. In
his first onset with the Danes, he listened only to a rash
and giddy courage ; he appears to have taken none of the
measures necessary for success : he was accordingly
defeated. Nor was this the worst. Humbled where he
should have been unshaken, pusillanimous where he
should have called forth unusual fortitude, he bribed the
enemy to leave his dominions. They took the money, and
transferred their depredations from Wiltshire, first to
Middlesex, next into Mercia. Burrhed, the vassal king
of Mercia, naturally imitated the example of his supe-
rior ; another offer of gold, which the Danes had no
sooner received than they devastated the country : in
despair he left his throne, and repaired to Rome,
where he soon died of a broken heart. Ceolwulf was
raised to it by his Danes themselves, with the view,
through him, of draining the province of its last re-
sources : so long as he could export money, he was
protected ; when the golden stream began to dry up, he
was put to death : he had no successor. In 875, the

invaders divided themselves into two bodies : one ravaged the south, another hastened to the north. . Halfdan, who headed the latter division, levelled Tynemouth to the ground, burnt Lindisfarne, forced the bishop to flee into the mountains with the relics of St. Cuthbert ; and consumed, with their convent, the nuns of Coldingham, who had disfigured their faces to escape the brutality of the pagans. In the south, in the neighbourhood of Cambridge, Gothrun was for twelve months inactive, yet he suffered no molestation from Alfred, until he and his party commenced the devastation of Dorset and the neighbouring counties. Still Alfred was in no disposition to fight : their entrenchments were, indeed, formidable ; but they might soon have been compelled by famine to surrender. He made them another offer of money : but eager to show that he was as cunning as their chiefs, he made them swear, first, on their arms, next, *on the relics of saints*, that they would leave Wessex. In possession of the gold, they issued one night from their fortifications, surprised and massacred his negligent cavalry, mounted the horses of the slain riders, and hastened to Exeter, which they seized and fortified. A slight advantage was gained at sea, by a few ships which he had manned with foreign mercenaries ; but it could not console his people, who had lost all confidence in him, whom his negligence no less than his vices had alienated. Imprudently dismissing his troops in the winter of 878, he was surprised and very nearly captured by Gothrun. Destitute of troops, of money, of friends, despised and deserted by the world, he assumed a disguise, and, to save his life, fled to a small island formed by the conflux of the Dove and the Parrett in Somersetshire, and since called Ethelingey, or the royal island. Useless as had been his warlike efforts, his presence, attended as he was by a valiant army, had kept the barbarians in check : his retreat placed all his people at their mercy : some fled into Wales, some into Gaul ; the greater number preferred submission. The enemy had for some time held Northumbria,

East Anglia, and Mercia : they now occupied the rest of the kingdom : the Saxon dynasty was at an end ; the Danish was established in its stead. — Sweet, it is truly said, are the uses of adversity. In his obscure retreat, the reputed servant of a swine-herd, Alfred learned to contemplate his own heart, to lament his past life, to detest the tyranny which he had practised, the passions which had misled him, the haughtiness which had estranged his people, the indifference which he had shown for *his* duties, and for *their* security. As he meditated, he blushed at his past conduct. What greatly assisted his moral reformation, was the deep sense of religion instilled into his mind during infancy. His retreat was at length discovered ; he was joined by a few determined patriots, and with them he frequently intercepted straggling parties, or convoys of the pagans. In this mode of warfare he acquired confidence in his own powers, and in the strength of his followers. Hearing that one of his earls had defeated a party of the Danes, and that the hearts of his people were elated by this novel success, he resolved to leave his retreat. By trusty messengers he invited them to meet him in Selwood forest, and the summons was cheerfully obeyed by the men of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somerset. Received by them with unbounded acclamation, he soon proved that he deserved it ; — that his soul was, as they hoped, purified by adversity. With his moral regeneration begins a very different order of things. In the very first action he not only defeated, but had Gothrun at his mercy ; yet he consented to acknowledge the royal dignity of the barbarian, on the condition of conversion and alliance, — a consent which partook more of generosity than of wisdom. Gothrun, with thirty chiefs, submitted to baptism ; his sponsor was Alfred ; and during the rest of his life, which he passed in his kingdom of Mercia and East Anglia, he continued faithful to his engagement. Not so, however, with his pagan followers, who were eager to welcome and to join the armaments which continually arrived from Scandinavia.

To be prepared against these hostile arrivals, he armed the inhabitants of the towns, who served as a civil militia, or national guard, under the command of a reeve ; while the rural population he divided into two bodies, the one to be continually under arms, the other to be occupied in agriculture, and alternately to change places with each other. And he was the first Saxon king who erected fortresses, which experience had proved to be the best means of resistance in the warfare of the age. The establishment of a permanent army and fleet, and in inland fortresses, contributed much to the repose that followed. He consequently increased in strength, and his fame spread throughout the island. But in his latter years he was again subject to the fury of the Scandinavians under Hastings, the most savage and able of all the piratical chiefs, except Rollo. This second war continued for some time, in the very heart of his dominions ; for such was the ignorance of the period in the attack of fortified places, that the Danes had only to form an entrenched camp, and they were safe. Hastings, after some years of warfare, tired of a country where he was sure to be ultimately foiled by the genius of his enemy, retired into France, and wrested from Charles the Simple a considerable fief. Another division of the adventurers, however, remained, crossing the kingdom from Chester to Kent, and from Devon to Northumbria, with an audacity that to us must appear surprising. Though he thinned their numbers, he could not exterminate them ; and at his death the realm was infested by many detached bands. 2. In his internal administration Alfred was much more admirable than in the field. That, after his reappearance in public life he should find the tribunals closed, the laws silent, was to be expected. From the statutes of Ethelbert, Ina, Offa, and other Saxon princes, he selected many, and added others, such as he considered best adapted to the circumstances of his people. To these laws we shall hereafter revert. The judges, who were at once ignorant and venal, he reformed with terrific

severity, if it be true, that in one year he put to death no less than forty-four. It is certain that all stood in dread of his stern justice; that they began to acquire knowledge, and with knowledge honesty. To his own learning, and to the care which he took to encourage it in others, we shall hereafter revert. Here we shall only observe, that literature and science were no less indebted to him than legislation. 3. The personal character of this monarch will exhibit opposite qualities, when viewed at two different periods. They who have been misled from their childhood by the bombastic declamation of Hume, who imagine him a personification of every virtue, and of all wisdom, will be surprised to hear that he had not only faults, but crimes, and grievous crimes, to bemoan. To these we have generally alluded; but let us be more explicit. The writer of the Life of St. Neot represents that saint as severely upbraiding him for his vices, and foretelling his humiliation. By this and by other writers he is charged with "intolerable tyranny;" with "cruel vices;" with "depraved manners;" with "ungovernable passions:" he is said to have been "dissolute," "cruel," "haughty." Even his friend, Asser of St. David's, who would gladly throw all his blemishes into the shade, and who applies the soft term *indiscretion* to revolting crimes, allows that he was deservedly punished for his early irregularities; that divine justice visited his folly with its merited penalty in this world, in order that he might escape in the world to come; that he treated with contempt the complaints of his people, and that he incurred theirs in return to such a degree, that, after his retirement to Ethelingey, they neither knew nor cared what had become of him. That one of his private vices was adultery, is incontestable. But peace be to his memory! Take him for all in all, and England cannot probably boast of such another monarch.*

* * Asserius Menevensis, Vita Aelfredi, 24—50. Chronicon Saxonicum, p. 81—99. an. 871—901. Chronicon S. Neoti, p. 15—175. Ranulphus Higdenus, Polychronicon, lib. vi. p. 256—259. Wilhelmus Malmshurienensis, de Regibus (in Vita Aelfredi). Wallingford, Chronica, p. 532, &c

Edward the Elder (901—925), the son and successor of Alfred, trod in the steps of his able father. Mercia he incorporated with his dominions, and he multiplied fortresses in the interior no less than on the coasts; but though he endeavoured, he was unable, to make much impression on the Danish kingdoms of East Anglia and Northumbria. It is, however, certain, that his power was greater than his father's. If he could not subdue East Anglia, as he had done Mercia, he forced the Danes to do him homage, and pay him tribute. It is worthy of especial remark, that the fortresses which he erected became, in after-times, so many towns, the municipal corporations of the Norman period. He left a numerous offspring: three of his sons succeeded him, in the order of birth; six of his daughters were married to so many powerful princes; three took the veil.—It is evident that none of the preceding sovereigns had any claim to the title of English monarchs: Egbert never attained to a real superiority over Northumbria; his immediate successors lost East Anglia and Mercia; Edward the Elder did not reign over more than two thirds of England. The glory of being the first monarch of England must be conceded to *Athelstan* (925—940), the eldest son of Edward. The mother of this prince was Egwina, daughter, we are told, of a neatherd. Whether his birth was legitimate, is doubted. Tradition would lead us to infer that his father Edward married Egwina after his birth. This hypothesis would account for the jealousy which he is said to have entertained of Edwin, his next brother, whom on some pretended charge he banished, and committed to the deep in a frail boat, with one companion only. There is no improbability in the story, but the authority on which it rests is questionable. In the second year of his reign Athelstan married his sister Editha to Sightric, the Danish king of Northumbria; and when Sightric in a

Fordun, *Historia Scotorum*, lib. iv. (variis capitulis). Ingulphus Croylendensis, *Historia*, p. 20—28. Chronica de Mailros, p. 144—146. Saxo-Græmaticus, *Historia Danica* (variis libris). Snorro Sturlo, *Heims-Kringla*, (variis sagis).

few months paid the debt of nature, he invaded that important province, and annexed it to his other states. The two sons of Sightric fled before him; the one, Anlaf, into Ireland, the other, Eadfrid, into Scotland. Athelstan was undoubtedly the first Saxon prince who extended the authority of his nation over Cumberland, a British principality, the existence and history of which are suffered to moulder in ecclesiastical records.* The other princes of the island, British and Scottish, obeyed his summons, met him at a place called Eadmote, swore homage and promised tribute between his hands. But the homage was reluctant; more than one of them rebelled; yet they rebelled only to be again reduced. In 937, Anlaf, who had procured the aid of several Irish, Scottish, and Scandinavian kings, arrived in the Humber with a vast armament, to strike a blow for the conquest of his paternal state of Northumbria. Athelstan hastened to meet him. To discover the quarters of the king, Anlaf, we are told, assumed the guise of a minstrel, penetrated to the royal tent, amused the monarch, was rewarded, and suffered to depart: but he was recognised by a soldier who had formerly served under him, and who advised Athelstan to remove his tent into another part of the field. The purpose of Anlaf was visible, when, that very night, the bishop of Sherburn, who occupied the place abandoned by the king, was destroyed, with all his attendants, by a determined band of Anlaf's followers. Though this incident is evidently too romantic to be true, the battle which ensued, that of Brunanburg, is equally celebrated by Scandinavians and Saxons. After a bloody contest, Athelstan triumphed, and was thenceforth styled, by the northern bards, "the Conqueror."† From

* The antiquities of this county have been sadly neglected. From the yet subsisting records in the Welsh and Saxon languages, from the Latin lives of saints, and compositions of early churchmen, from the incidental notices to be found in Scandinavian writers, much remains to be drawn. We hope one day to contribute our full quota towards the elucidation of this dark subject.

† There are some curious circumstances connected with this battle, which all our historians, except Turner, have overlooked, and which even he has but imperfectly noticed. Of course we have not space to detail them.

this time the victor, laying aside the humble title of king of the West Saxons,— the title of all his predecessors,— assumed that of “ king of the English Saxons ; ” sometimes, “ king of the English ; ” occasionally, “ king of all Britain.” So great was his fame in other countries, that three princes, all destined to become signal, were educated at his court, — Haco the Good of Norway, Alan duke of Bretagne, and Louis d’Outre Mer, king of France * : and his daughters were married to great potentates.† *Edmund*, the son and successor of this great prince (940—946), was immediately summoned to the field by an invasion of Anlaf, who forced him to surrender in full sovereignty all the counties north of Watling Street. Fortunately for England, however, the formidable Dane soon died, and the new kingdom was subverted. During the recent commotions, the British king of Cumbria had rebelled : Edmund expelled him, blinded his two sons, who had the misfortune to fall into his hands, and conferred the country as a fief on Malcolm of Scotland. His end was tragical, and characteristic of the times. While celebrating the festival of St. Augustine, a noted robber named Leof was perceived among the guests. The cup-bearer ordered him to depart ; he refused : Edmund, in fury, hastened to the spot, and seized the robber by the hair ; but the man, who had a dagger concealed under his vestments, plunged it into the monarch’s body, and was instantly cut to pieces by the enraged attendants. As the offspring of Edmund were yet infants, the wittena-gemot conferred the sovereignty on *Edred* (946—955) his uncle. The reign of this prince was remarkable for the efforts of the restless Northumbrians to regain their independence. They had always been more attached to the Danish than to the Saxon sway : they eagerly espoused the cause of any royal adventurer who promised to free them from the southern yoke ; and though they were generally sub-

* See Vol. II. p. 48.

† Henry the Fowler wished one for his son Otho ; the polite Athelstan sent two, Editha and Adina, that the young prince might make his choice : the former was chosen.

dued, they were obedient only so long as a formidable army was at hand: no sooner did that army depart, than the fugitive claimants of royalty returned, to reign and be expelled as before. Silent as our ancient historians sometimes are on the deeds of these adventurers, there can be no doubt that, as the Scandinavian annals assure us, Danish and Norwegian princes frequently left their country to assume the government of Northumbria. This, however, is not the work in which their names and actions can be traced: such an investigation is the province of the voluminous historians of the kingdom, but hitherto none of them have devoted due attention to the subject. One of these kings, Eric, had been allowed by Edmund to retain the Northumbrian sceptre; but this restless barbarian was too fond of piracy to remain tranquil: he betook himself to the deep, ravaged the coasts of Ireland, Scotland, and England, and opposed Edred in the open field; but he was defeated, betrayed, and put to death in the wilds of Stanemoor. After this success Edred destroyed the feudal government of Northumbria, which he incorporated with his dominions, and placed under the administration of earls: Osulf, the betrayer of Eric, was the first who bore the title. Edred was alike weak in mind and body; but he was well sustained by two able ministers, the chancellor Torketul, and Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury. About the character of the former there is no dispute; all admit him to have been an able and virtuous man, who, after governing the realm with success, retired to the monastery of Croyland, which he had rebuilt. But Dunstan has been made the subject of acrimonious contention by writers of opposite religious principles. The truth, probably, is, that he deserved neither the vituperation of the one party, nor the extravagant praise of the other.* The reign of *Edwy* (955—959), son of Edmund and nephew of Edred, brings this churchman more prominently on the stage. Edwy had certainly few claims to respect: regarding

* We shall detail Dunstan's life in the next chapter.

his predecessor as an usurper, though that predecessor, for the interest of the community, had been elected by the witan, he degraded or banished or confiscated the substance of all who had favoured his uncle ; even his own grandmother Edgiva he reduced to poverty ; and he is said, by contemporary authority, to have been exceedingly libidinous, disregarding, too, in the gratification of his appetite, the holiest bonds of society. On the feast of his coronation, he disrespectfully left his assembled thanes and prelates for the apartments of Edgiva, who by some is believed to have been his wife, but within the prohibited degrees, and, consequently, considered by the canons as his mistress ; while others, and those the most ancient, affirm that she was his mistress. It is difficult to say in which relation she stood to him ; but even if, contrary to the canons, he had married her, the connection was illegal, — in those days criminal. It was Edwy's duty to set the example of obedience to the laws : if *he* ventured to marry a kinswoman, under what colour could he enforce the penalty decreed by them against any of his subjects who imitated his example ? * It was insulting enough to leave his barons and prelates on such an occasion ; it was more so to leave them for such a woman. They felt it ; and deputed two of their body, Dunstan and the bishop of Lichfield, to bring him back. The two messengers found him, says the oldest authority, a contemporary, too, of Dunstan, in a libidinous attitude, with both the reputed wife and the mother : in fact, both are said to have been equally his mistresses, the alternate objects of his lust in each other's presence. To us this seems too monstrous to be credited : the devotion of the acrimonious biographer of Dunstan to that churchman leads him eagerly to relate the exaggeration of common report. Had mother and daughter been rival mistresses, would they have lived in such apparent harmony ? If one of them was his wife, would she have suffered her husband's familiarities with the other,

* We by no means assert that she was his *wife* : the weight of evidence rather inclines the other way.

in the same palace, under her very eyes? But though we should grant that Edwy was married to the daughter — for he would never have chosen the mother — though we receive with contempt the assurance of the biographer, that Dunstan and the bishop found Edwy “more maligno inter utrasque, velut in vili suillorum volutabro, creberrime volutantem,” — in fact, a physical impossibility — we yet have no high opinion of the ladies. Even on the most favourable hypothesis, both must have known that the connection was illegal; in that age they must have believed it to be sinful; and little respect will be paid to the woman who outrages public opinion. The messengers were justified in soliciting the king to return; but assuredly they were not in *forcing* him to do so: if he refused, as he evidently did, to leave the apartment, it was their duty to retire. But Dunstan, who was sometimes arbitrary enough, seized the young prince, and dragged him to the hall of festivity. The insult would not have been readily forgiven by a subject, by a monarch never, least of all by the ladies, who menaced the abbot with revenge. It was doubtless through their influence that he was deprived of his temporalities, and banished; and it is probable enough — for what woman in such a situation ever forgives, ever stops at half measures? — that they despatched ruffians after him, to blind him, and that their purpose would have been effected had he not embarked before the messengers reached the coast. But Dunstan had a friend in Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, who excelled him in severity: hearing that the king still maintained Elgiva in one of the royal villas, the churchman ordered her to be seized in his absence, to be branded in the face, and to be banished to Ireland. She soon returned, but it was to meet a worse fate: at Gloucester she fell into the hands — one account says of the archbishop’s servants, another of the Mercians, who were in insurrection against Edwy: — she was barbarously hamstrung, and she soon died from her sufferings. Unfavourable as is the opinion entertained

of Odo, we do not believe that this horrible crime was committed at his instigation, or with his knowledge. But he had offended the king too deeply to hope for pardon, and he escaped through a revolution. Edgar, the king's brother, was raised up as a rival to Edwy, whose headstrong qualities had rendered him unpopular. From that feeble king the provinces of Mercia and Northumbria were soon wrested. But this division of the monarchy did not long continue. Edwy died of a broken heart, or was assassinated, in 959. In his later days he appears to have learned moderation—to have laboured to regain the affections of his people. However this be, it is evident that he is as much to be censured as his persecutors.*

The reign of *Edgar* (959—975) was one of profound tranquillity; hence posterity has given him the enviable epithet of the Peaceful. The Northumbrians, who, under his predecessors, had been such enemies to the prosperity of the nation, he maintained in obedience, partly by caresses, partly by a demonstration of force. The attention paid to maritime affairs by our Saxon ancestors, in particular by this monarch and his ministers, will appear from the fact that his fleet, consisting of three hundred and sixty sail in three squadrons, annually made the circuit of his dominions under his personal command. Before such a force, the sea-kings and the pirates of Ireland were glad to retreat, and the Northumbrians to remain at peace. The better to weaken the chiefs of that province, he divided it into two earldoms,—the one extending from the Humber to the Tees, the other from the Tees to the Frith of Forth; and none of his predecessors exceeded him in zeal for the administration of justice. The winter months he usually spent in travelling from

* *Chronicon Saxonieum*, p. 99—116. *Chronicon S. Neoti*, p. 174. *Ranulphus Higdenus*, *Polychronicon*, lib. vi. p. 259—264. *Anonymus*, *Historia Eliensis*, lib. i. (variis capitulis.) *Wallingford*, *Chronica*, p. 538, &c. *Anonymus*, *Vita S. Dunstani*, cap. 4. *Adelardus*, *Epistola ad Elphegum de Vita S. Duns.* p. 148. *Eadmerus*, *De Vita ejusdem*, p. 211, &c. *Osbernus* (sive *Eadmerus*), *De Vita S. Odonis*, p. 78, &c. *Bollandistæ*, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Maii xix. *Wharton*, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii. *Alfordus*, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonice*, tom. iii. (sub annis.)

county to county to receive the complaints of the poor, to punish ignorant or corrupt judges, and to reconcile civil enemies. In regard to the church, he is no less celebrated for his reforms. The chief was the substitution of monastic for secular clergy. To the Benedictines he was a great friend. He boasted that he had founded or restored fifty houses of the order. Monks were brought from Abingdon and other parts to fill the places of the prebends, who, for their vices, were expelled or transferred to other churches. It is strange that this monarch was not crowned until the thirteenth year of his reign. Was this a penance for certain vicious acts? The story of his amour with Elfrida is well known; nor does there seem any reason to doubt it.* He certainly married that widow, and by her had Ethelred, who succeeded after Edward the Martyr, his eldest son by a former wife. Another instance of his lust, that he violated a young lady, who, to escape his brutality, had put on a monastic veil, is indisputable.† Whatever was the cause which retarded his coronation, the ceremony itself was most splendid; and that it was not a mere display of pomp, that it was accompanied by real power, is evident from the well-known fact that at Chester he received homage from eight princes who rowed him across the Dee. These were, Kenneth of Scotland, Malcolm of Cumberland, Mac Orric of Anglesey, Jukil of Westmoreland, Jugo of Galloway, and three of Wales. *Edward the Martyr* (975—978) was only thirteen when he succeeded to his father; and his claims were opposed by his stepmother Elfrida, who wished the sceptre for her own son, and by the ejected secular clergy, who beheld with no great satisfaction the triumph of the monks. His tragical death, while drinking on horseback a cup of mead at the door of Elfrida's residence, Corfe Castle, in Dorsetshire, transferred the sceptre to *Ethelred II.* (978—1016), one of

* It is doubted by Lingard (vol. i. p. 247.), the most judicious of all our historians; but we think there is no ground for his scepticism. That Elfrida was capable of any thing, is evident from her subsequent conduct.

† See the Life of St. Dunstan in the present vol.

the feeblest and most despicable sovereigns that ever afflicted a people. Scarcely was he in possession of the advantage won by his mother's murderous deed, when the Scandinavian pirates renewed depredations which the vigour of preceding monarchs had suspended. Ten thousand pieces of gold prevailed on the leaders to depart, but only to invite new attacks. The very next year brought new swarms, who ravaged the country with impunity: and the Northumbrians rose to join their kindred. Tempted by the alluring prospect, in 994, two kings, Sweyn of Denmark, and Olaf of Norway, arrived with a hundred vessels, and, though unable to make any impression on London, they ravaged the southern counties at pleasure. The despicable Ethelred, who trembled at the sight of an enemy, escaped for a moment by the payment of a huge weight of gold. Other swarms soon desolated his provinces; yet in 1001 the stupid poltroon incited to new ravages by the payment of a third sum, greater than either of the preceding. On his marriage with Emma, a princess of Normandy, hopes were entertained, that, by the favour of the powerful duke of that province, he should be able to resist the invaders; but, as if his conduct were to be systematically base in itself, and fatal to the country, by his neglect of that excellent princess, he transferred her brother, duke Richard II., from an ally into a foe. The same year he put the climax to his wickedness and folly, by causing (November 13. 1002) a general massacre of the naturalised Danes. Money had failed to remove them; arms were not to be thought of; what then so effectual as murdering them unarmed, unapprised, unsuspecting of danger? No sooner was the horrid deed consummated, than Sweyn, who was off the coast, hastened to revenge his countrymen; and his wrath was deepened by the fact of his own sister Gunhilda having fallen a victim with the rest. During the four following years the kingdom was a prey to every possible calamity—to fire and sword, to sickness and famine, to violence and perfidy: had it been sunk to the bottom of the ocean.

nobody could have pitied its fate. Having laid waste all the central and southern provinces, which he covered with ruins and deluged with blood, Sweyn consented (1007), on the payment of thirty-six thousand pounds of silver, to stay his destroying mandates. Seeing that nothing was to be effected by such policy, the witenagemot raised a fleet, which they manned with a numerous army; but such was the incapacity of Ethelred and his favourites, whom he placed over the armament, — such the cowardice of some, and the treachery of others (several were continually in correspondence with the Danes), — that most of the vessels were lost, and the rest returned without striking a blow. Though, during the following year, Sweyn himself, in consideration of his engagement, refrained from heading the pirates, his place was well supplied by Torkil, who, at his instigation, desolated the greater part of thirteen counties, laying several towns, among which was Canterbury, in ashes. At length, *he*, too, consented to retire for forty-eight thousand pounds. In these disasters we know not which most to admire, — the wicked folly of the king, the worthlessness of his ministers and generals, or the cowardice of the people: for cowards they must certainly have been, or they would never have suffered such indignities, nor would it have been said of them, that ten Englishmen were unequal to contend with one Dane. That justice was everywhere suspended; that famine abounded; that, for the sake of subsistence, parents sold their children for slaves; that human passion had no restraint, were not the only evils: the frequent sums paid to the Danes were necessarily raised by direct taxation on land; and the tax was retained long after the occasion that gave birth to it. — The success of Torkil awakened the jealousy of Sweyn, who, in 1013, reappeared at the head of a formidable force, with the avowed purpose of wresting the sceptre of England from the despicable hands which held it. Almost without a blow the cowardly people recognised his authority, and swore allegiance to him: even London did homage to the royal

Dane ; and Ethelred, in a panic, fled to Normandy, where his brother-in-law, for the sake of Emma, afforded him protection. The crown would at this time have, doubtless, passed from the Saxon to the Danish line, but for the unexpected death of Sweyn, who, in his last will, appointed his son Canute his successor. Ethelred was recalled, — and for a moment the popular enthusiasm sufficed to expel the invaders. Instead of conciliating his Danish subjects, who had married and settled in the country, this creature resorted to his former notable system of cold-blooded assassination. Canute, who had long made preparations, reappeared, and was joined by more than one favourite of Ethelred. The two hostile armies laid waste the counties which refused or hesitated to join them. Most of the country recognised Canute ; the whole would have done so but for the courage of *Edmund Ironside*, who on his father's death (1016) succeeded to a doubtful inheritance. A fierce conflict now commenced in which most of the Saxon thanes who continued faithful to the throne were hurried to a premature grave. As the Danes, too, had severely suffered, both they and the natives were disposed to an accommodation. The chiefs of both armies met, and the country was divided between the two kings — the counties *north* of the Thames falling to Canute, the rest to Edmund. In a month after this pacification, the English hero was assassinated, probably at the instigation of Canute. *Canute the Great* (1016—1035) thus attained the object of his ambition. The two sons of Edmund Ironside he sent out of the country, to the court of Olaf, king of Sweden, with the purpose, we are told, of being put to death ; but that Olaf, disdaining to be a murderer, yet anxious to remove them from the path of Canute, sent them to the court of Hungary. The one died in his youth ; the other, Edward, married a daughter of the German emperor ; and the issue was Edgar Atheling. The throne of Canute was established by his

marriage with Emma, the relict of Ethelred, — a step which transferred duke Richard of Normandy from an enemy into an ally. This monarch had abilities equal to any situation. That his efforts to win the confidence of the English were not ineffectual, appears from the readiness with which, after rewarding his Danish followers, he dismissed them all, except a chosen body of 3000. He placed the two nations on the footing of equality ; administered justice between them with strict impartiality ; or, if he showed favour to either, it was to the natives. In fact, he was one of the best princes that ever swayed the English sceptre ; if in his earlier days he was ferocious, after his establishment on the English throne he became humanised by Christianity. Of his zeal for religion, no less than for the temporal welfare of his people, we have evidence enough in his acts. There was an air of barbaric grandeur about this monarch, not to be found in any other sovereign of the times. As by arms or inheritance he reigned over Denmark and Norway no less than England, he may be also called the most powerful ; but his chief elevation is to be found in his moral qualities ; which, as he increased in years, became most estimable. There are in history few instances of men so completely reclaimed from evil to good. On his death, the crown should have descended to his son Hardicanute ; but as that prince was then absent in Denmark, it was usurped by *Harold*, surnamed *Harefoot* (1035—1040), an illegitimate son of the late king. This prince has little claim to our respect : by treachery he allured a son of Ethelred, then in Normandy, into England, seized him, and put him to a cruel death, with some hundreds of companions. *Hardicanute* wielded the sceptre only two years ; and of his government we know little, yet that little is not unfavourable. His death, without issue, separated the connection between Denmark and England ; Magnus, son of Olat, succeeding to the former, and *Edward*, surnamed the *Confessor*, to the

atter. Edward, however, who reigned from 1042 to 1066, was only a younger son of Ethelred II. The crown was the rightful inheritance of prince Edward, the son, as before related, of Edmund Ironside; but the nephew was absent, and the uncle was invested with it amidst the acclamations of the English, who rejoiced, beyond measure, at the restoration of their Saxon line. A good, but not a great, king, anxious for the well-being of his people, but often frustrated in his views by the interested opposition of others, whom he had not firmness to restrain, Edward must be at once loved and pitied by posterity. Of his powerful nobles, the most noted was earl Godwin, whose daughter he had married, though, from mistaken devotion, he abstained from her bed. The quarrels of the members of this potent and turbulent family, both with the Saxon thanes and with one another, distracted the reign of Edward. At one time all were banished; but they were powerful enough to insist on their recall. On the death of Godwin, Harold succeeded to his influence on the mind of the king. There is reason to believe that Harold meditated for many years his succession to the throne, and the consequent exclusion of the princes exiled in Germany. When the king recalled those princes, with the avowed purpose of constituting Edward his heir, Harold's views seemed to be thwarted; but Edward, who was not suffered to approach the king, suddenly died. Suspicion whispered that the death was violent—the work of earl Harold. Edgar Atheling, indeed, who had accompanied his father, stood in the same relation to the throne; but as Edgar was feeble alike in body and in mind, the ambition of Harold continued to burn. He had soon a new and unexpected competitor in duke William of Normandy, who had just the same claims as himself, viz. none whatever, beyond an accidental connection by marriage with the royal family. The result is too well known to be detailed here. On the death of Edward, Edgar Atheling was discarded; Harold usurped the throne, to be

precipitated from it by another usurper, equally unprincipled, — the Norman bastard. *

II. GOVERNMENT, &c.—Having glanced at the chief revolutions, we proceed to consider the society of the Anglo-Saxons, as exhibited in its institutions. And, first, of its government and internal administration.

The first place in dignity, if not in power, must naturally be assigned to the *cuning*, or king. As amidst their native forests the Saxons had, from time immemorial, elected their war kings, or generals in chief, so, after their settlement in Britain, the same mode of election prevailed. From the early history of the states established by them, we infer that their first rulers were merely military leaders, who could do nothing without the consent of their brother warriors. It was, doubtless, by degrees that the king was entrusted with ampler powers—with the execution of the decrees passed in the *witena-gemot*, or assembly of the elders of the people, military, civil, and religious. Hence his powers were much more limited than in almost any other European country. He was the creation of his subjects; for so preponderating was the privilege of election, that even the eldest son of a king was not necessarily the heir: he might be, and, indeed, often was, set aside in favour of a brother or an uncle. In fact, the whole history of the polyarchy will prove that, though some member of the reigning family was chosen, little regard was paid to the strict laws of succession. The case, indeed, was the same in the other tribes of the great Gothic nation—in Spain and Lombardy no less than in Britain; but in none does the royal power appear to have been so restricted by custom as in the latter country. Yet where there is military command, there will often be violence. At the head of a devoted

* *Chronicon Saxonicum*, p. 117—171. *Ranulphus Higdenus, Polychronicon*, p. 266—286. *Ingulphus, Historia*, p. 1—74. *Anonymus, Historia Ramesiensis*, cap. 94, &c. *Anon. Historia Eboracensis*, lib. ii. (*variis capitulis*.) *Chronica de Mailros*, p. 149—159. *Eadmer, Historia Novorum*, *passim*. To these must be added, the Norman and Scandinavian authorities, which it is not worth while to specify.

band of warriors, the king would often extend his authority to matters which were not legitimately subject to it. But for the exercise of that authority he was responsible to the witan ; on its assembling it was suspended : he was then but *primus inter pares*, until the monarchy was established —until the numerous petty states were absorbed by the increasing sphere of Wessex. In regard to the extent of the royal power, we certainly find a great difference, in its exercise at least, between the immediate descendants of Hengist, or Cerdic, and those of Egbert. This difference is conspicuous in the chronicles ; it is equally so in the laws, which, from this latter period, are manifestly pervaded by a more regal spirit. By these two guides we may satisfactorily trace the progress of that power. Originally, it comprised no more than the supreme command of the forces by sea and land. As the country was won by the sword, he received, or assumed, the privilege of bestowing it in portions on such of his companions as had exhibited most valour. That this privilege would greatly augment his consideration is sufficiently evident : we may add, that he reserved the lion's share for himself. That his private, or, rather, official estates were most extensive, is stated by several writers : though we may doubt that they occupied one half, or even one third of the kingdom, we cannot doubt that they were ample enough to place great means of corruption in his hands. Those means were greatly augmented when the judicial administration was assumed by, or vested in, the crown ; and when the fines and penalties levied on offenders (let it be remembered, that the leading feature of the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, like that of all the Germanic nations, was pecuniary composition) were chiefly turned into the royal exchequer. In virtue of this new civil capacity, he became, like other sovereigns, the true head of the state : he appointed its great dignitaries, ealdormen, sheriffs, reeves ; judges ; he could depose them, as it appears, even without legal

conviction, as his mere caprice might suggest. We have seen with what severity Alfred punished the corrupt, or ignorant, or negligent judges of his time. It is difficult to account for the recognition of so dangerous a prerogative in the chief magistrate of a limited monarchy : it must surely have been usurped in times of violence. That he should be empowered to revise the decisions of the judges, to commute the punishment of death, to liberate a prisoner whenever he entered a jurisdiction, were less odious prerogatives. In some other respects, he was surrounded with much outward pomp. Three times in the year his great tenants were compelled to visit his court—to stand at a humble distance while he was seated on his throne, invested with the symbols of majesty. His will could suspend the most deadly feud : though vengeance was in the hands of kindred and friends, his peace or protection secured any offender, any obnoxious individual, against the pursuit of his enemies. Sometimes, as during the octaves of the three great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, he extended his peace to the whole kingdom. At no time could a feud be prosecuted within about four miles of his actual residence : the same protection secured travellers on the four high-roads, and merchants on the navigable rivers. His oath was never required in evidence ; his bare word sufficed. Still we must not forget that his power was limited. He could not make a new law ; he could not issue a degree of general obligation without the consent of the witan ; he could not despoil the meanest subject of property, or deprive the meanest of liberty ; he could not bind or whip the meanest. The unbounded influence which he exercised over the officers of administration, while over the rest of the community he had none, might appear incredible, did we not, in our own days, see a case exactly parallel in the Grand Seignior. Like him, that sovereign could order the execution of an army of functionaries ; while the Mahometan law surrounds with a sacred ram-

part the life, liberty, and substance of the meanest believer.*

Next to the king in dignity was the *ealdorman*, or *earl*†, who was at once the general and judge in his *shire*. Sometimes, indeed, his jurisdiction extended over several counties: thus we find one only for Wessex, and one only for Northumbria; but these were exceptions from the general rule, and were seldom made: in such turbulent times,—and the whole period of the polyarchy may be denominated one almost uninterrupted scene of turbulence,—it was doubtless found unsafe to intrust such ample powers to any one dignitary. He had an associate in the administration of justice—the bishop, who presided with him in his court: without such a check, he must speedily have become an irresponsible tyrant. He appears, too, even in his military capacity, to have held a divided power. We read of *heretocks*, or leaders of the army, by whom he was accompanied: but, after all, these might merely be lieutenant-generals, and his deputies when he was absent from the field. The *hold* and *child* are dignities which we cannot exactly define. The former appears to have been the warden of later times; the latter to have been the heir apparent of the earl. Through the gloom of ten centuries, we can but imperfectly discover the relative proportions of figures which men played so prominent a part on the stage of life. Subordinate to the ealdormen were the *gerefas*, the sheriffs, or reeves, of whom there were several in every shire or county. There was one in every borough as judge; there was one at every gate, who witnessed purchases [outside the walls; and there was one, higher than either, the high sheriff, who was properly the reeve of the shire. This last appears to have been appointed by the king. Their functions were to execute

* Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonice*, et Gibson, *Chronica Saxonica* (in a multitude of places). Lingard, *History of England*. vol. i. Appendix I. Turner, *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. book viii. chap. 1. & 3.

† There does not appear to have been any real distinction between the two.

the decrees of the king or ealdorman, to arrest prisoners, to require bail for their appearance at the sessions, to collect the fines or penalties levied by the court of the shire, to preserve the public peace, and to preside in a subordinate tribunal of their own. — Who was the *gesith*? Was he inferior to the sheriff? These questions cannot be answered. The word signifies a *companion*, or *attendant* (*comes*), which is uniformly translated by Alfred* *gesith*; but whether this functionary was an attendant on the king only, or on the great earls, no less than on the king, is uncertain. We know that his *were*, or the penalty demanded for his homicide, — the only safe criterion by which to estimate rank, — was sometimes rated equal to a sheriff's, sometimes below it. This fact appears to prove that the earls had *their* gesiths, who ranked below those of the king. — Of *thanes*, from *thegnian*, to serve, there were also gradations in dignity. There were the great and the less thanes, the thanes of the king, and those of the earls: even prelates had their thanes. The royal thane depended on his sovereign only: he was amenable to the tribunal of no other judge; while the less thane was immediately dependent on his superior lord, the earl or bishop. It was their duty at all times to resist an invader; or, at their superior's summons, to carry the war into the territory of an enemy: during certain periods, too, they were compelled to assemble armed. This military service was the condition by which they held their lands. Five hides, or 600 acres, with a church, a kitchen, a bell-house, and a tribunal, distinguished the less thane. Every five, indeed, though split among several proprietors, was compelled to furnish a man-at-arms; his expenses to be equally defrayed by all; but this warrior was not a thane. The qualification of the higher, or royal thane, appears to have been *sixty* hides. From this fact, and because we read that the great had their thanes, we may infer that the one class were barons, the other knights: by some ancient

* In his translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History.

writers, indeed, who lived after the conquest, the great thanes are so styled. That, in addition to the above dignities, the Anglo-Saxons of a later age had their *cnihtas*, or knights, is indisputable from the evidence adduced by the industrious Mr. Turner. The *cniht*, however, had' not the dignity of the subsequent ages, when chivalry became so high a distinction. He was the military attendant of some king, earl, or prelate; he did not properly belong to an order; his was merely a distinction of honour. We have not the slightest intimation that he held land as a knight: the title was, apparently, applied to such thanes as were distinguished for valour; and to some who, without any territorial qualification, were yet the faithful military attendants of their superiors.*

From a glance at the Anglo-Saxon dignitaries, it is evident that their functions were of a twofold nature—that they were at once military and civil. The cyning, the ealdorman, the geref, the thegn, nay, even the bishop and abbot, were bound alike to appear in the field, and to sit in the tribunals. This fact proves that the elements, at least, of the feudal system existed during this period. We read not, indeed, the names, but assuredly we find the substance, of lords and vassals, of homage, suit, service, purveyance, reliefs, wardage, scutage, &c. As the country was won from the Britons, it was divided and subdivided: those who had the more extensive grants immediately from the king, on the condition of service, were careful to secure dependants in their turn by partitions of their territories. Whether the king, on the death of a tenant, could dispose of the vacant benefice or fee, or whether it descended by hereditary right to the heir,—subject, of course, to the same services and obligations,—has been much disputed: nor shall we wonder that it should, when we read that, sometimes, the king, without opposition from the heirs, conferred it on another; at other times, that this proceeding called forth the murmurs of

* *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae, et Chronica Saxonica* (in places too numerous to be cited). Turner and Lingard, *ubi supra*.

those who considered themselves injured by it. The fact appears to have been, that, in England, as in other countries, there was a long-continued struggle between the king and the nobles,—the former to seize, the latter to preserve the benefice,—and that, at length, a compromise was effected between them ; the sovereign agreeing that the lands should pass to the next heirs, subject to certain obligations :—1. If the condition on which they were granted, *military service*, were not punctually observed, either they reverted to the king, or a heavy fine atoned for the neglect. Strict justice, the very nature of the compact, doubtless demanded a forfeiture ; and, in serious cases, forfeiture was manifestly the only penalty that would satisfy the interests of the state ; but, in minor ones, to the one party a fine was as agreeable, by the other it was more cheerfully paid.—2. When an estate changed hands, whether by the natural laws of inheritance, or by testamentary bequest, it was always burdened with the *relief*, or, as it is termed by the Saxons, the *heriot*. The amount varied with the rank of the individual. The heriot of an earl was four horses equipped, as many without saddles and bridles, four helmets, four coats of mail, four swords, eight lances, eight shields, and 100 mancuses in gold. That of a king's thane was one half ; that of an inferior thane, one horse, one suit of armour, his hounds and hawks.—3. There is reason to infer that the rights of *wardship* were exercised by the crown. In this case, the benefice must have been heritable by females ; for whom, that the conditions of the feudal compact might be fulfilled, the king was privileged to provide husbands.—4. A less doubtful condition was that of *purveyance*—the obligation of furnishing the royal household during its perambulation with forage, provisions, and lodging. And the land was subject to other impositions, their tenants to other prestations, the nature of which it would be vain to investigate.*

* The same authorities, with the addition of Ducange, *Glossarium ad criptores Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis*, sub vocibus.

Of the preceding dignitaries, and of the bishops, with some abbots, was composed the *witena-gemot*, the assembly of the wise, the grand council, or parliament of the nation. But were they attended by no other persons than the military tenants — the earls, thanes, prelates, &c., who held lands by the tenure of service — and by the numerous inferior officers of administration? This question, which has given rise to such acrimonious disputation, has been decided by every one, according to his bias, in favour of aristocracy, or of democracy. One of the more recent disputants, Mr. Turner, whose industry is much superior to his penetration or judgment, who is more fanciful than acute, contends that some of its members were the representatives of the free population, or ceorls, whether inhabiting the country or the towns, — the knights and burgesses of a later age.* His chief reasons — for he has no authority — are founded on the assemblies of the ancient Germans, and on the impossibility of assigning the precise period when representatives were first admitted into the national parliaments. In regard to the former part of the hypothesis, it is sufficient to observe that, even in the cradle of the Gothic nations, the chiefs only deliberated; that the people were present merely as spectators. Among the Franks, indeed, as we have seen in the preceding volume, every military tenant was expected to appear annually in the *placita regni*; but even they had no deliberative voice: we know that they regarded the obligation as most burdensome, and that they were always eager to evade it. The second hypothesis is still more absurd. If there really existed, under the Anglo-Saxon monarchs, any such privilege as popular representation, would not some one of the many writers whom time has spared have given us an incidental intimation at least of it? If we cannot fix the precise origin of a custom, are we, therefore, to suppose that it is coeval with the national existence?

* We take Mr. Turner merely because he is the last of a numerous host of champions on the same side.

"If," says Mr. Turner, "the freeholders of the Anglo-Saxon counties were not represented in their witenagemot, at what other time did this most important privilege originate? That it should have begun *after* the Norman conquest is incredible. If the legislative council of the nation had been, from immemorial custom, confined to the king and nobles, their sturdy maintenance of all their exclusive rights and advantages is evidence that they would not willingly have curtailed their power by so great an innovation. The pride of nobility would not have admitted un noble freeholders to have shared in the most important of its privileges; and, least of all would the fierce and powerful Norman lords have placed the Anglo-Saxon freemen, whom they had conquered, and with whom they were long in jealous enmity and proud hatred, in the possession of such a right. But the total absence of any document or date of the origin of the election of representatives by the freeholders of counties is the strongest proof we can have that the custom has been immemorial, and long preceded the Norman conquest."

It would be difficult to select any passage in any author containing so strange a misconception of the subject. Assuredly, if the option had depended on them, the nobles would never have consented to see the representatives of the people invested with the honour of a seat in the legislature; but it is no less certain,—and the fact is known to every schoolboy,—that the deputies were summoned by the crown with this express view, among others, of counterbalancing the power of the nobles; and, consequently, in opposition no less to their wishes than to their interests. The king was unable to resist or to control that powerful order: he invoked the aid of the people through their representatives; with that aid, after a hard struggle, he conquered.

"It has been pretended," says a far higher authority*, "that, not only the military tenants had a right to be present, but that the *ceorls* also attended by their representatives, the *borsholders* of the tithings. The latter part of the assertion has been made without the shadow of evidence; and the former is built on very fallacious grounds. It is, indeed, probable that, in the infancy of the Anglo-Saxon states, most of the mi-

* Dr. Lingard.

litary retainers may have attended the public councils ; yet even then the deliberations were confined to the chieftains ; and nothing remained for the vassals but to applaud the determination of their lords.”——“ The principal members seem to have been the spiritual and temporal thanes who held immediately of the crown, and who could command the services of military vassals. It was necessary that the king should obtain the assent of those to all legislative enactments ; because, without their acquiescence and support, it was impossible to carry them into execution. To many charters we have the signatures of the witan. They seldom exceed thirty in number ; they never amount to sixty. They include the names of the king and his sons, of a few bishops and abbots, of nearly an equal number of ealdormen and thanes, and occasionally of the queen and of one or two abbesses. Others, the fideles, or vassals, who had accompanied their lords, are mentioned as looking on and applauding ; but there exists no proof whatever that they enjoyed any share in the deliberations.”

Another writer (Hallam), whose judgment is also entitled to more weight than Mr. Turner’s, and who will not be suspected of any bias against popular rights, expresses a doubt, and, in our opinion, a well-founded doubt, whether even “ the lesser thanes, or inferior proprietors of lands, were entitled to a place in the national council. Very few, I believe,” continues this writer, “ at present imagine that there was any representative system in that age, much less that the ceorls, or inferior freemen, had the smallest share in the deliberations of the national assembly. Every argument which a spirit of controversy once pressed into this service has long since been victoriously refuted.” In our opinion, one anecdote sets this subject at rest. The brother of an abbot of Ely paid his addresses to a noble lady, who rejected them on the ground that he could not sit among the witan, because he did not possess forty hides of land. The abbot, however, secretly supplied the deficiency from the lands belonging to the monastery. From this relation it is evident, that a very high qualification, 40 hides, or 4800 acres of freehold property, was necessary to constitute a leading or deliberative member of that assembly.

We say *leading*, for we can scarcely suppose that the qualification for a mere seat in it could be fixed so high.—Leaving the degree of qualification in the members of the witan,—a consideration which has, perhaps, occupied too much of our notice, — the assembly was convoked and presided by the king, at the three great festivals, Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, and at other times when the interests of the nation demanded. Its powers are not well defined. That it elected the sovereign ; that it dictated the terms of the compact between him and the nation ; that its consent was necessary to the promulgation of new laws, and to treaties with foreign powers ; that it was a supreme court of judicature, receiving appeals from all other tribunals ; that it issued general regulations for the public defence, and the course of internal administration ; that it took, even in the first instance, cognizance of crimes committed by the great, have been abundantly proved. With the consent of his ealdormen, prelates, thanes, &c., the king generally issues his decrees. But in estimating the powers of the witan, we must not lose sight of the fact, that the king sometimes assumes a tone of superiority scarcely consistent with its independence. *My* bishops, *my* ealdormen, *my* thanes, being admitted to *my* council, I, the sovereign, decree, &c.—is a formula of high regal pretensions. The truth seems to be, that the powers of this assembly depended on the character of the monarch, and on the circumstances of the times. If that character were feeble, the members were not slow in arrogating to themselves a preponderance in the constitution ; if it were firm and vigorous, they were satisfied with exercising the privilege of councillors.*

Immediately below the official dignitaries we have mentioned as constituting the witenagemot, were the

* *Historia Elyensis*, lib. ii. cap. 40. p. 513. *Leges Anglo-Saxonice* (in a multitude of places). Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, et *Chronicon Saxonum*, passim. Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 177—220. Lingard, *History of England*, vol. i. Appendix. Hallam, *Europe during the Middle Ages*, vol. ii. p. 388.

ceorls, or free husbandmen, of whom most held lands either by freehold or by some other tenure. No *ceorl*, however, could possess five hides of even copyhold or boclands; for the moment he obtained that quantity, he became entitled to the rank of thane. As a freeman, if he were in the service of any master he could at any time leave that service; if he held lands from any one, he could at any time surrender them, though they could not be taken from him so long as he fulfilled the conditions on which he had received them: nor, as a freeman, could he be put in bonds, or whipped. There were, however, many crimes which degraded the free to the rank of slaves; such instances were of daily occurrence. Unhappily, slaves constituted by far the most numerous portion of the population; assuredly in the proportion of three to one. For this numerical preponderance it is not difficult to account. That the first adventurers were freemen, is undoubted; but, as they won the country from the Britons, they would want slaves to cultivate it; hence they would be careful not only to reduce the conquered inhabitants to the same class, but to supply the deficiency of agricultural hands by the importation of serfs from Germany. The children inevitably inherited the lot of the parents. The number was still further augmented by free-born Saxons, whom debts or crimes degraded; and by some who, to escape the horrors of want, voluntarily assumed the state of slavery. In the presence of proper witnesses, the unhappy man laid down the sword and the lance, the emblems of freedom, and took up the bill and the goad, the badges of thralldom; then kneeling, and placing his hands between those of his master, he completed the irrevocable act of self-degradation. All slaves, however, were not equally unfortunate: that there were distinctions among them, is evident from the names that have descended to us; and that some were comparatively comfortable, while others were subject to the hardest fate, no less appears from the situations they filled in the household of their masters. Thus we read of fe-

male slaves of the first, second, and third rank ; that the duties of the first were easier than those of the second, of the second than those of the third. But some distinctions puzzle the ingenuity of modern antiquarians. What was the difference between the *esne* and the *theow* ? between the *bordar* and the *cockset* ? between the *herde* and the *parding* ? Some were in the mansion of their lord ; some tilled his ground, and inhabited the huts in its vicinity ; others exercised, for his benefit, the trades which they had been taught. All were transferable with the land ; were bought, sold, or given like cattle. Thus, on the manor of Spalding, which Harold of Buckenhale gives to the abbey of Croyland, we read of Colgrin the bailiff, Harding the smith, Lefstan the carpenter, Elstan the fisherman, Osmund the miller, and nine others, probably husbandmen, all of whom, with their wives and children, their goods and chattels, accompanied the manor. Thus also Wynfleda, in her will, bequeathes to Eadwold, "Ceolstan the son of Elstan, and the son of Effa and Maertin ;" and to Eadgyfu she leaves "Aelsige the cook ; Teft, the daughter of Wereburga ; Herestan and his wife ; Ecelm, his wife and child ; Cynestan ; Wynsige, the son of Bryhtric ; Edwin, the son of Bunel, and the daughter of Aelfera." The documents which remain to us of these distant times frequently afford us information respecting the value of slaves. Thus Ediwie, the widow of Saewgels, bought Gladu for ten shillings ; that sum covering the toll or duty which was always paid to the sheriff or beadle when a slave changed masters. It is some satisfaction to find, that the toll of a man was much above that of a beast ; consequently, that his estimated value was greater. Thus, in the burgh of Lewis, the gerefa received a farthing for an ox, and fourpence for a slave. Ten shillings appears to have been a common price for a slave, whether male or female : thus Alfgivu and Gunnilda were each sold for that sum ; but Tydefleda fetched five shillings only and a few pence, probably because she was beyond the time of breeding : two others,

one a male, the other a female; obtained three mancusæ, or about seven shillings and sixpence. Manumission was very frequent. 1. We read of cases where slaves purchased their own freedom, a proof that some of them at least could possess property. Thus Elfsig the Red purchased his freedom for one pound: thus also, for two pounds, Brightmaer purchased not only his own, but that of his wife, his children, and grandchildren. 2. Manumission by will was common. Thus Wynfleda, in her last bequest: —

“Let Wulfere be freed, and follow whomsoever he likes best: and let Wulflæde be freed, on condition that she follow Ethelfleda and Eadgiva*: let also Gerburg be freed, and Misen, and the daughter of Burhulf and Cinnæ: let Elfsige and his wife, and his eldest daughter, and Ceolstane's wife, be freed,” &c.

From this passage, and others that might be adduced in abundance, it is evident that this redemption was often partial; that though the liberti were no longer in the class of slaves, no longer subject to the brand or the whip, or the capricious tyranny of an owner, they were yet bound by some species of obligation to him or his family; certain services were still to be performed; or certain payments to be made by them. In most cases, however, the manumission was complete. 3. It sometimes took place during the life of the owner. Thus, in the time of king Edgar, a landholder directs that thirteen out of his thirty slaves should be freed by lot; and that the emancipation was complete is certain from the fact that they were ordered to be placed in the highway to go whithersoever they pleased. Thus also when the celebrated St. Wilfrid received as a present the Isle of Selsey, containing 250 slaves, he instructed, baptised, and freed them all. 4. Sometimes the charitable and the pious redeemed slaves from captivity. Thus Leofwin redeemed from John the bishop at Bath the female theow Sydelleda for five shillings. Thus Edgyfu the Good redeemed Hig and Dunna, with their

* Such partial enfranchisement was very common in all the Germanic tribes.

offspring, for thirteen mancusæ. After all, however, even at the time of the Conquest, when the free population had for centuries been so much increased, even then it may be doubted whether the number of slaves was not treble that of the free. The denominations, indeed, in Domesday Book are not always very intelligible; the precise meaning of the terms *bordarii*, *villani*, *cotarii*, *soccomenni*, &c. must puzzle us; but that they were not wholly free is evident from their being distinguished from the *liberi homines*. Neither were they *slaves* in the abject meaning of the word; for they are as much distinguished from the *servi* as from the *liberi*. No doubt, however, can be entertained that they were in various cases of dependence on some superior, whose service they could not leave, nor their children after them. Of this mixed character, exempt from the immediate control of a superior, yet owing him service, homage, or periodical returns of some kind, were the *burghers*, or inhabitants of the towns, who, by charters held from the crown or the lord of the manor, could hold markets, and trade in community even to foreign ports. These were divided into villeins, *bordarii*, *socmanni*, &c. just like the rest; though they were doubtless superior to the rest in the privileges, which, as guilds or corporations, they had obtained from the favour or the avarice of their lords.*

The judicial system of the Anglo-Saxons, as far as it can be ascertained at such a distance of time, is well worthy our notice. 1. If we except the supreme witan, which judicially was chiefly a court of appeal for more important affairs, the most distinguished tribunal was the county court, or shire-gemot, which appears to have been held twice every year, — in spring and autumn. This court consisted of the thanes of the county; who acted as a sort of jury to the two presiding judges, of

* *Leges Anglo-Saxonice* (in a multitudine locorum). *Chronicon Saxonum* (in multis locis). Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. iv. cap. 13. Ingulfus, *Historia*, p. 86. See also the Appendix of Lye, *Dictionarium Saxonico-Lat.*, and the Dissertation of Hickes, *Turner, Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. Lingard's *England*, vol. i. Appendix 1.

whom one was the bishop, the other the ealdorman, or in his absence the high-sheriff. If any thane could not attend, he was obliged to send in his place either his steward, or his chaplain, bailiff, and four of his chief tenants. Their jurisdiction of course extended to all the affairs transacted in the shire, whether as appeals from the inferior courts, or in the first instance. Their first deliberations regarded the affairs of the church; the second, those which regarded the revenues and rights of the crown: they then descended to the suits of individuals. And, from the fact that the new laws passed by the king and the witan were laid before the shire-mote, we should be almost justified in the inference that a second sanction was necessary before they could have the effect of law in that particular county. These courts were not, as Ingulf relates, who is followed by most modern writers, established by Alfred; they existed long before the reign of that monarch. 2. And it is equally untrue that the same king, for the better administration of justice, divided each shire into *hundreds*; these are, in fact, the *pagi* of Tacitus, and are repeatedly alluded to in the laws of the Germanic tribes.* It is not easy to account for the origin of the term; the most specious hypothesis is that which made each of these subdivisions originally consist of one hundred freemen capable of carrying arms. The disproportion at a much later period between the number of hundreds in different counties, — Sussex, for instance, being sixty-five, while Lancashire had but six, and in the number of families inhabiting each hundred, — is no argument against the supposition; the south of England, we well know, was much more populous than the north; and it is certain that the allotments of domain would not long remain in the hands of the original number of proprietors. By sale or testament, by forfeiture, or default of issue, in some districts, the number of families would soon exceed a hundred, while in others it would fall short of that number. On the whole,

* See Vol. II. p. 41.

however, there can be no doubt that the tendency would be to multiply the number and to diminish the extent of these inheritances.* In each of these districts a court called a *hundred-mote* was held ; but we know not how often, nor what was the qualification for the assessors. It differed in one respect from the centuary courts of the Continent, which were presided by their own peculiar officer, while in England the president was one of the king's sheriffs. An appeal from its decisions lay to the shire-mote. 3. Was there also an inferior court still, that of the *tithing* ? By most writers the answer has been in the affirmative ; they contend that as each shire was divided into hundreds, so each hundred was subdivided into tithings, each consisting of ten families, and each containing its court presided by the tithing-man. That there was an officer of this name is unquestionable ; but there is only slight evidence to prove that he had a court : he appears rather to have been a petty constable, charged probably by the hundred with the execution of such matters as related to his own district. What appears certain is that every freeman was enrolled in some tithing, just as every tithing made part of a hundred, and every hundred of a shire. But this is not all ; to secure, in so violent an age, the blessing of internal quiet, every man was directly interested in the good conduct of his neighbours. The ten or more families comprised in a tithing, were joined in a sort of pledge for one another's good behaviour ; they were perpetual bail for one another. If they were not actually obliged to make good the misconduct of any one among their number, — an hypothesis which has some respectable defenders, — it is at least certain that they were compelled to produce him before the court of the hundred. For this purpose nine days were allowed them : if the culprit fled, the pecuniary penalty for his offence

* *Hundredas continet centum villas*, says Brompton. This confirms the hypothesis : wherever an original proprietor fixed his abode, he would soon be surrounded by his kindred and slaves, and a village would soon arise on the spot.

was levied on his property ; and if that property were insufficient to cover the amount, the deficiency was raised by the tithing. The arrest of such offenders, or at least their compulsory attendance before the court, and the levy of the mulcts pronounced by it, appear to have been the chief duties of this officer. 4. But, if this functionary was not a magistrate, there yet appears to have subsisted a court inferior to that of the hundred. The jurisdiction known by the name of *sac* and *soc*, was of a more feudal character than any of the preceding ; it appears to have been a privilege vested in the chief proprietor of a district, — the lord of a manor, as he is styled under the Norman system, — of holding a court, called the hall-mote, to enforce his own rights, or to redress the grievances of his vassals. The competency of these local tribunals, which were probably a foreign addition to the Germanic, and consequently to the Anglo-Saxon economy, was not uniform. Some of them had cognisance of all crimes within the district, others of certain crimes only ; some controlled any individual within it, others their own retainers only. It is evident, however, that such an institution, — one so feudal, and so little assimilated to the general character of Saxon judicial administration, — was essentially Norman ; it might be born, it could not be perfected, nor even developed, during the period under consideration. 5. But what was the *folk-gemot* ? That such a tribunal was sometimes formed by the ealdorman, or sheriff, on the spot, is clear from the history of Ely and other chronicles. Did it always consist of freeholders in that hundred only ? Or was the ealdorman at liberty to summon assessors from any of the neighbouring hundreds ? The latter appears to have been the case ; consequently the folk-gemot, the assembling of which was occasional, was distinct from the hundred-mote and the shire-mote. 6. Besides the above tribunals there were others more difficult to be explained ; these were the royal tribunals, presided by the king's sheriff, or some other judge. How often

they were convoked, or how far their jurisdiction extended, cannot be decided; we sometimes read of them in full activity, revoking some causes from the regular tribunals, and undertaking others even in the first instance. The presiding officer of these occasional courts, which were generally ambulatory, appears to have been the king's deputy. 7. At the head of all the tribunals, that to which appeals from all, save from the witenagemot, were carried, was the one in which the king himself presided. This court was but casually held; for the sovereign was little disposed to interfere between his people and their judges unless tempted by a present, or influenced by some personal consideration. From these observations it is manifest that the usual tribunals of the Anglo-Saxons were those of the hundred and the shire; the hall-motes appear to have prevailed in some districts only where feudal jurisdiction had been usurped or conceded by royal favour; the ambulatory courts of the royal judges do not seem to have been regularly or, indeed, often formed; while the court in which the king himself presided, and that of the witan, were supreme tribunals of appeal, approachable by none but the rich and the powerful. From the few records of suits now extant we can only form a partial idea of the proceeding: as far, however, as we can judge, they appear to have been characterised generally, indeed, by natural equity, but often by precipitation, sometimes by great rashness. It is, indeed, impossible not to perceive that poverty, or low station, when assailed by power, was not sufficiently covered with the shield of the law.*

The forms of proceeding, whether in civil or criminal cases, we shall give in the words of one who has taken a more connected and comprehensive view of the subject than any other historian: —

* Authorities: the Anglo-Saxon laws, in the collection of Wilkins; the Saxon Chronicle; the chronicles of F. and Ramsey; the histories of Lingard and Turner; with other works. Where the authorities are so numerous, and where the pages referred to are absolutely endless, it is impossible to specify the passages, unless half a page be taken up with figures.

"In all these tribunals the judges were the free tenants, owing suit to the court, and afterwards called its peers. But the real authority seems to have resided in the president, and the principal of his assessors, whose opinion was generally echoed and applauded by the rest of the members. Their proceedings were simplified and facilitated by a custom which has already been mentioned. In all cases in which property, whether real or personal, was concerned; if a man claimed by gift or purchase; if stolen goods were found in his possession, or he had forcibly entered on the lands of others, he was bound to produce the testimony of the court and witnesses before whom the transaction on which he grounded his own right must, if it had been lawful, have taken place.* On this testimony in civil actions the judges frequently decided; but if either party advanced assertions of such a nature that they could not be proved by evidence, he was put on his oath, and was ordered to bring forward certain freeholders, his neighbours, acquainted with his character and concerns, who should swear that in their consciences they believed his assertion to be true. The number of these was, in many cases, fixed by the law; in others, left to the discretion of the court. Sometimes four or five sufficed; sometimes forty or fifty were required: occasionally men came forward spontaneously, and offered themselves by hundreds to swear in behalf of a favoured or much injured individual.† But, it should be observed, that the value of each oath was estimated by the rank and opulence of the individual. The oath of a king's thane was equal to the oaths of six ceorls, the oath of an ealdorman to those of six thanes.‡ The king and the archbishop, as their word was deemed sacred, were exempted from the obligation of swearing; and the same indulgence was sometimes extended to the higher orders of the nobility. If the matter still remained doubtful, a jury was selected of twelve, or of six-and-thirty free tenants, who left the court, deliberated among themselves, and returned a verdict

* The sheriff of the gate, or the porte-reeve, was the legal authority before whom transactions *outside* the gate passed; the borough-reeve witnessed those which happened *within* the gates. In the tithings and hundredis they were witnessed by the proper officer. In the dearth of written instruments such a testimonial authority was necessary. Often, however, a certain number of freeholders or householders were competent to witness a bargain. Let no man, says a law of Canute, buy any thing above the value of fourpence without four witnesses.

† "Thus 1000 persons offered to swear in behalf of the thane Wolfnoth. — *Historia Elgensis*, p. 479. It was called by the Saxons the cada; by later writers wager of law. How far it is allowed in modern times may be seen in Blackstone, 1. ii. c. 22. sect. vi."

‡ Doubtless on the principle that the higher the individual in rank or opulence, the farther was he removed from the ordinary temptations to perjury. It is characteristic enough of these rude times that virtue and station, vice and degradation, were considered almost inseparable.

which decided the question. I will mention an instance in which recourse was had to each mode of proceeding, and judgment was given on grounds which to us must appear irregular and unsatisfactory. In a court held at Wendlebury, in which the ealdorman Ailwin and the sheriff Edric presided, an action was brought against the monks of Ramsey, by Alfnoth, for the purpose of recovering the possession of two hides at Stapleford. After much litigation, the decision was left to a jury of thirty-six thanes, who were chosen equally by the plaintiff and the defendants. While they were out of court deliberating on their verdict, Alfnoth publicly challenged the monks to prove their claim by oath. The challenge was accepted; but when they were prepared to swear, the ealdorman arose, observed that he was the patron of the abbey, and offered himself to take the oath in its favour. This decided the cause. The court, through respect for its president, was satisfied with his word, adjudged the two hides to the monks, and condemned Alfnoth in the forfeiture of his lands and chattels. By the interest of his friends the latter part of the judgment was revoked, on condition that he would never more disturb the abbey in the possession of Stapleford. In criminal prosecutions the proceedings, though grounded on the same principles, were in many respects different. It was ordered by law, that as soon as the hundred-mote was assembled, (the same probably held with respect to other similar tribunals,) the reeve, with the twelve eldest thanes, should go out to enquire into all offences committed within the jurisdiction of the court, and should be sworn "not to foresay (present) any one who was innocent, nor to conceal any one who was guilty."* On their presentment the accused was frequently condemned: if he pleaded not guilty, and the plea were admitted, there remained two ways by which he might prove his innocence — the purgation of cada, or swearing; and the ordeal or judgment of God. — In cases in which the law had not determined, he was at liberty to choose either; but, to check the presumption of the guilty, it was ordered that if the trial failed, the criminal should be subjected to a more rigorous punishment. In the purgation by oath he began by calling God to witness that he was innocent, both in word and work, of the crime laid to his charge. He then produced his compurgators, who swore that "they believed his oath to be upright and clean." It was required that these compurgators or jurors should be his neighbours, or resident within the jurisdiction of the court,—freeholders, who had never been arraigned for theft, nor ever convicted of perjury, and who were now acknowledged to be true men by all

* Leg. Sax. 117. Evidently the origin of grand juries.

present. According to the custom of the district, and the magnitude of the offence, their number varied from four to seventy-two. They were sometimes appointed by the judges, sometimes drawn by lot, often brought into the court by the party himself, an indulgence which enabled him to rest his fate on the decision of his friends and dependents, whom he might have already prejudiced in his favour. In Wessex he was permitted to choose thirty jurors, of whom fifteen were rejected by the judges: in East Anglia and Northumbria he produced forty-eight, out of whom twenty-four were appointed by ballot.* If they corroborated his oath by their own, in the form established by law, his innocence was acknowledged. If, on the contrary, recourse was had to the ordeal, pledges were given for the trial, and the time was fixed by the court. As the decision was now left to the Almighty, three days were spent by the accused in fasting and prayer. On the third, he was adjured by the priest not to go to the ordeal, if he were conscious of guilt: he was then communicated with these words, 'May this body and blood of Christ be to thee a proof of innocence this day!' when he again swore that he was guiltless of the crime of which he had been accused. The ordeals which were most in use, were those by hot water and fire. In the former, a fire was kindled under a caldron, in a remote part of the church. At a certain depth below the surface, which was augmented in proportion to the enormity of the crime, was placed a stone or piece of iron, of a certain weight. Strangers were excluded: the accuser and the accused, each attended by twelve friends, proceeded to the spot; and the two parties were ranged in two lines opposite each other. After the litanies had been recited, a person was deputed from each line to examine the caldron; and if they agreed that the water boiled, and the stone was placed at the proper depth, the accused advanced, plunged in his arm, and took out the weight. The priest immediately wrapped a clean linen cloth round the part which was scalded, fixed on it the seal of the church, and opened it again on the third day. If the arm were perfectly healed, the accused was pronounced innocent: if not, he suffered the punishment of the offence. In the ordeal by fire, the same precautions were employed in respect to the number and position of the attendants. Near the fire a space was measured equal to nine of the prisoner's feet, and divided by lines into three equal parts. By the first stood a small stone pillar. At the beginning of the mass, a bar of iron weighing one or three pounds, according to the nature of the offence, was laid on the fire: at the last collect it was taken off and

* Leges Sax. 8. 12. 27. 47. 125. 262. 264.

placed on the pillar. The prisoner immediately grasped it in his hands, made three steps on the lines previously traced on the floor, and threw it down. The treatment of the burn, and the indications of guilt or innocence, were the same as those in the ordeal by hot water."*

From the earlier portion of the preceding extract, and from other passages which we could easily adduce, it is manifest that, to our Saxon ancestors, the trial by jury was not unknown. That this noble institution was far from perfect, that it was only in its rude state as transplanted from the Germanic forests, that ages were required to give it the improvement it afterwards attained, is very true ; but these circumstances do not invalidate its existence. Writers who have denied that existence prior to the Norman times, have confounded it with the form of compurgation by oath. In all the Germanic codes, the accused, where guilt was merely presumptive, had the privilege of swearing with a certain number ; that is, of producing neighbours to swear, that in their consciences they believed he was innocent. This is as common in the Anglo-Saxon as in any of the rest ; but when we read of a certain number of freemen chosen by the parties to decide in a dispute — all bound by oath to vote in *foro conscientiæ*, — and that *their* decision, not the will of the judge presiding, ended the suit, we at once perceive that a great improvement has been made in the old form of compurgation, — an improvement which impartial observation can have no hesitation to pronounce as identical in its main features with the trial by jury.†

In the judicial economy of the Anglo-Saxons, nothing is more remarkable than a custom to which we have already alluded, that of *frank pledge*, or of mutual respon-

* *Leges Anglo-Saxoniciæ*, 26, 27, 53, 61, 131., et ubi supra. Lingard, *History of England*, vol. i. p. 361, &c.

† Ducange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores*, voc. *Nemboda Juramentum*. Spelman, *Glossary*, voc. *Jurata*. Hickesius, *Dissertatio Epistolaris*, p. 33., &c. Lindenbrogius, *Glossarium in Codicibus Legum Antiquarum* (sub vocibus). *Anglo-Saxon Laws*, *passim*.

On this subject three competent judges, Turner, Lingard, and Hallam, speak more doubtfully than the justice of the case requires. They were evidently puzzled by the contradictions of learned men.

sibility among the members of a tithing. Such a custom, in such a state of society, was inevitable. Where the royal authority was distant and weak ; where the people were characteristically addicted to murder and robbery ; where private revenge was sanctioned by law, no less than by immemorial tradition ; where most crimes were redeemable by a pecuniary composition ; where violence was too common to excite surprise ; where even outlawed bands lived by open depredation, now escaping, now braving, the forces raised by the sheriff to oppose them, what hope of security remained from individual responsibility ? The only reasonable remedy was to throw the burden of the reparation on the community in which the offender dwelt ; to make all responsible for the crime of any individual among them. This system of frankpledge will be best understood by glancing at its progress. At first it appears to have involved no more than the mere obligation of producing a delinquent at a given time ; but as this was found insufficient — as the punishment of the offender did not affect his neighbours or kindred, who, in fact, were always his neighbours — the next step was to force the kindred to stand security for the payment of any pecuniary mulct in which he was convicted, that payment of necessity to be paid out of his own substance : hence they became interested in his good conduct, in his continuance among them, and in the integrity no less than the improvement of his property. When a man had been once convicted, or when he was suspected of a disposition to crime, his neighbours were bound to give surety for his future good behaviour. “ If,” says the seventh law of king Edgar, “ any one be frequently defamed, and publicly noted as deceitful or perjured ; if he refuse to appear before the court of the hundred, let certain men from the court go in search of him, and let him find a surety (*fidejossor*) if he can ; if he cannot, let him be captured dead or alive, let his substance be taken from him, and compensation made to his accuser ; of his land, let the lord

of the manor take one half, the hundred the other half." * This severe injunction was doubtless necessary, to enable the hundred to deal with its refractory criminals. The next stage was still more rigorous. By it every man, whether innocent or suspected, was compelled to find a surety, that if ever judicially summoned he would appear: and that the surety was no vain formality, is evident from the fact, that if any one committed bodily injury and fled, his fidejossor was compelled to pay the penalty in his stead.† "And I will," says the same monarch, "that every man, whether he live within or without a borough, be under bail; and if he cannot obtain it, let the town or hundred be responsible for him." ‡ From subsequent laws, however, we infer that individual cautions were found to be ineffectual; for every man was compelled to reside within some town or hundred, or tithing, the aggregate members of which were to be his sureties. In some cases the tithing, when a criminal was not to be produced, was allowed to purge itself from the guilt of participation in the crime, and, consequently, was not compelled to pay the penalty unless the fugitive left sufficient property behind him for that purpose. In general, however, they were responsible for the deficiency which might remain after the culprit's effects were sold.

"The members of a tithing," says Mr. Hallam, "were no more than perpetual bail for each other. The greatest security of the public order (say the laws ascribed to the Confessor) is that every man must bind himself to one of those societies which the English in general call freeborgs, and the people of Yorkshire ten men's tale. This consisted in the responsibility of ten men, each for the other, throughout every village in the kingdom; so that if one of the ten committed any fault, the

* "Si quis crebra accusatione infamatus, et populo mendax sit, et conventum non visitet, tunc evocentur ex conventu qui proficiscuntur, et inveniat sibi fidejossorem, si possit: si tunc nequeat, capiat quocunque modo possit, sive vivus sive mortuus," &c.

† Quilibet homo inveniat ubi fidejossor cum — et si quis tunc injuriam faciat et aufugiat, portet fidejossor quod ille portare debuerat.

‡ "Hoc præterea volo ut quilibet sub fidejossoribus sit tam intra quam extra urbes, et ubi hoc non obtinet continuatur in qualibet urbe et qualibet centuria."

nine should produce him in justice, when he should make reparation by his own property or by personal punishment. If he fled from justice, a mode was provided, according to which the tithing might clear themselves from participation in his crime or escape; in default of such exculpation, and the malefactor's estate proving deficient, they were compelled to make good the penalty. And it is equally manifest, from every other passage in which mention is made of this ancient institution, that the obligation of the tithing was merely that of permanent bail, responsible only indirectly for the good behaviour of their members."

But what says a law of the Confessor? "If a murder be any where committed, let the town where the criminal abode be searched for him; if he can be discovered, let him be brought within a week before the king's tribunal: if he is not within that period, let a month and a day be allowed to seek him; and if he be not discovered in a month and a day, let forty-six marks be paid by the town where the deed was committed. And if the town or village be too poor to raise that sum, let the deficiency be supplied by the hundred in which the place is situated." And what means another law, *De Friborgis*, which does not allow any man to live on his own responsibility, but subject to some tithing? If, as this judicious writer* contends, there was no obligation beyond that of permanent bail, what means another law of the seventh century, which renders a host accountable for the conduct of any guest whom he may entertain beyond two nights? In reality, the spirit of mutual responsibility pervades the whole system of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. Every freeman above the age of twelve was of necessity enrolled in some tithing; and that for no other reason than that some particular community might be responsible for his conduct. That the country freemen, the unshackled rural population, were no more at liberty than the burgher, is evident from the law we have before cited, rendering it imperative on every one to have a fidejossor. No one could be without a lord; he might, indeed, quit the one he had, but only on the condition of his engaging with another. If he failed to

* Hallam.

procure a surety, his kindred were bound to present him in the county court, and to name a lord or patron for him : any rustic freeman without one was liable to arrest as a robber. We may add, that no man could leave the shire in which he dwelt without the permission of the ealdorman.*

If from the classes and the general obligations of society we pass to the laws, we shall find something to exercise reflection. We shall briefly consider them, not systematically, but in the order of time as promulgated by successive kings, accompanied or followed by such general observations on their characters as may naturally arise. This mode of examination will enable us the more clearly to understand the progressive spirit of these laws : there will assuredly be found a great difference in that spirit at two different periods ; in the time of Ethelbert, for instance, and that of the Confessor.

The laws of Ethelbert, king of Kent, are the most ancient that have descended to us. In number they are eighty-nine ; and in spirit, as may easily be supposed, they are rude as the Germanic customs on which they are founded : in some parts, however, they bear the evident impress of a better character, — of that which St. Augustin was at such pains to stamp on them. In this, as in all the Germanic petty codes, the chief offences against society, though promiscuously huddled together, may be classed under four heads, — homicide, bodily injuries, crimes against chastity, theft. 1. In homicide, the first peculiarity that strikes us is the twofold compensation, — the *were*, or compensation awarded to those who most suffered by the deed, the relations of the deceased, and the *wite*, or the public penalty which atoned to the community for the loss of a member ; but, in the earliest stage of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, the *wite* was exacted only in certain cases, while the *were* appears to

* *Leges Eadgeri*, p. 78. 80. *Leges Altfredi*, p. 31., &c. *Leges Ethelstani*, p. 56. *Leges Edwardi*, p. 199., &c. *Leges Hlotharii Regis Cantii*, p. 9. Hallam, *State of Europe*, vol. ii. p. 401—407. *Spelman et Ducange, Glossaria* (sub vocibus).

have been uniform, — not varying, as in subsequent times, according to the rank of the murderer and the victim. Thus, the general penalty for the murder of a freeman was 100 shillings; but, if the deed took place by an open grave, there was also a wite of 20. If the murderer fled, his kindred were compelled to pay the were, though they escaped the wite. If the victim were the guest of a ceorl, the wite was 6 shillings. If a host-killed the noblest guest, the wite was 80; if one less noble, 60; if a third-rate guest, 40 shillings. To understand this distinction, it is necessary to observe, that all freeholders were conventionally divided into three classes, — the twyhind, the syxhind, and the twelfhind. It is not to be supposed that every man thus classed had necessarily two or six or twelve hides of land; but if he had not, either his property approximated to that quantity, or he belonged to a family which had it. The twyhind man was ranked among the ceorls, or simple freemen; the twelfhind man was a royal thane; the syxhind man occupied an intermediate station between them. The place where the homicide was committed was a material feature in the graduation of penalty: if in one of the king's towns, the wite was 50 shillings; if a ceorl's, 12. 2. Bodily injuries are still more carefully graduated, both by the rank of the parties, and by the extent of the damage. In a very few cases, as where one man ran a lance into the right thigh of another, the estimate of that damage was left to the courts of justice; but generally the mulct was determinate. If, after a blow, the bone appeared, 3 shillings; if the bone were affected, 4; if broken, 10. The loss of an ear was compensated by 12, of an eye by 50, of a nose by 20, of a foot by 50, of the large toe by 10, of the other toes by 5 shillings: but the fingers were judged more valuable; for the loss of the thumb was 20, of the forefinger 8, of the next finger 4, of the ring finger 6, and, singularly enough, of the little finger 11 shillings. The same graduation held good in regard to the nails of these

little members ; and, when any member was merely bruised, the mulct varied according to the estimated utility or importance of the part. Thus, if the ear were slit, 3, if the nose, 9 shillings ; and the loss of a tooth varied from 4 to 1 ; regard, however, being had to the circumstance whether one only, or several, were lost ; for though the compensation for a front tooth was 1 shilling only, if four were lost the mulct was 6 for each.* To lay hands on another, to bind him, or pull him by the hair, was cognisable by the law ; and where the sufferer was a female, especially if she were an honoured matron, since the dishonour affected both herself and husband, the penalty was twofold. No crimes by slaves, however, were visited with a double mulct ; while those of which slaves were the victims were much more leniently punished than when the sufferer was free. 3. If any one slept with the maid-servant of the king, he paid 50 shillings ; if she were his grinding servant, 25 ; if one of his inferior servants, 12 shillings : if she were the domestic of an earl, the mulct was much less ; 12 shillings for the highest servant, and still less if she were in the household of a ceorl, or simple freeman, the chastity of whose cupbearer was estimated at 6 shillings ; of his inferior servants, at 50 or 30 *scættas*.† If one freeman seduced the wife of another, the mulct was not only the same as if he had killed one of his rank, but he was compelled to buy another wife for the injured husband, and bring her to him. From this remarkable passage, it appears that the crime effectually destroyed the *vinculum matrimonii* ; it certainly rendered the wife infamous, and placed her, if not beyond the

* Si cui genitale membrum abscondatur, triplici muleta ordinaria illud compensetur ; si pertusum sit, vi sol. emendet ; si quis inciderit, vi sol. compensit.

† "Of the value of the *scætta*," says Dr. Lingard (*Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 469.), "I am compelled to confess my ignorance." And so are we. Its value appears to have varied from the time of Ethelbert to that of Athelstan. A sufficient approximation to the truth may be had from the fact, that it was either about one twelfth, or one twentieth of a shilling. In the former case, the chastity of a ceorl's maid-servant was worth the magnificent sum of two shillings and sixpence ; in the latter, of somewhat more than half the sum.

pale of the law, at least beyond its privileges. These were the penalties when the woman was willing ; if the crime were effected by violence, a severer one was provided. If the sufferer were a widow, the penalty was twice her *mundbyrd*. Now, the *mundbyrd* was the right of protection enjoyed by an individual, not only in his own person, but in that of his family or domestics : thus, if any one forcibly entered the house or premises of another ; if, while in it, he behaved violently, he paid a compensation according to the condition of the man so disrespectfully treated. For example, if he drew a weapon, or fought in the house, he paid a certain sum to the owner for the violation of the *mundbyrd* ; a fact which proves that every man's house was indeed his castle. The *mund* of a king was 50, of a *ceorl* 6 shillings. Much to the honour of the people, more respect was had to the defenceless sex ; for the *mund* of a widow was higher than that of her husband : thus, while a *ceorl*'s *mund* was only 6, his widow's was 12 shillings. When the victim of this brutal violence was a maiden, a mulct of 50 was paid to her father or legal protector, and the ravisher was besides compelled to buy her as his wife : if she were betrothed to another, the mulct was the same, but there was besides a wite of 20 shillings. 4. Theft occupies a prominent place in all the barbaric codes. The penalty in this case, too, was regulated by the rank of the offender ; the higher the rank, the greater the mulct : in the same degree, the higher the person robbed, the greater the compensation. Thus, if one freeman robbed another, he was sentenced to make a threefold reparation, and to pay the king a wite, with the loss of his goods ; if he stole from a king, the compensation was ninefold ; if a slav were convicted, the compensation was only double. The church took care to protect its own property by severe penalties. Thus, the stolen property of God and the church was to be restored twelvefold, of a bishop elevenfold, of a priest ninefold, of a deacon sixfold. Let the reader compare the preceding laws with extracts we have

given from the Germanic codes, in the second volume of this work, and he will at once detect the identity of many.*

The next collection of laws, in point of antiquity, are those of Lothar and Edric, also successive kings of Kent, of whom the former ascended the throne in 673, somewhat less than sixty years after the death of Ethelbert. They are only sixteen in number, and are evidently intended as supplementary to, no less than corrective of, the preceding. They exhibit a much greater distinction as to penalties for crimes committed against persons of high and those of low degree; they separate by a broader gulf the different classes of society; and they are more severe in their character than those of Ethelbert — a proof that the vices of the people were on the increase. Under the former laws, the were for a nobleman was the same as for any other man, 100 shillings: by the present, if a slave killed a noble, the were was 300 shillings, and the culprit was delivered to justice; or, if he were suffered to escape, the value of a fourth man, or 100 shillings, was added, and the owner was compelled to swear that he was unable to prevent his flight. If a slave killed a freeman, the were was 100, but the law also required the delivery of the homicide, and the additional price of a man. As slaves were the ready instruments of their masters' vengeance, the increased severity of the law, was, in reality, aimed at the owner. In these laws we first read of sureties, or fidejussores, who were to answer for the appearance of any person charged with theft or any other crime; for in these times all felonies were bailable. If the accused omitted to find sureties, he was fined twelve shillings. And in them, too, we first read of verbal injuries. "If," says the eleventh law of these princes, "any one call another perjured, or address him by any other ignominious title, in the house of a third person he shall pay six shillings to the individual so treated, one to the owner of the

* *Leges Æthelbirhti*, i. 89. p. 1—7. *passim*. See also Vol. II. on *Germanic Jurisprudence*.

house (for the mundbyrd), and twelve (the wite) to the king." And if a man appeared armed among others who were drinking, he was in like manner compelled to pay the same mundbyrd and the same wite: if quarrelling followed, and blood were shed, the full mundbyrd was paid, according to the rank of the master, and the wite was raised to fifty shillings. Equally novel are two other precautions: the one rendered a host who entertained a guest three nights, responsible for the conduct of that guest; the other enjoined the Kentish men, who might buy and sell in London, to have true witnesses, — either two or three true men, or the sheriff, — present at the transaction. None of these additional regulations argue much for the improvement of this savage people.*

The laws of Wihtred (694—725) successor of Edric to the throne of Kent, which were passed in the fifth year of his reign, amidst a concourse of clergy headed by Brethwald, archbishop of Canterbury, partake more of an ecclesiastical than of a temporal character. In fact, they relate almost exclusively to the immunities of the clergy, and to the canonical penance now recognised as additional to the legal. By them the mundbyrd of the church was raised to that of a king: the obstinate adulterer was declared excommunicate; the priest who lived with his wife, or neglected to administer the sacrament of baptism to the infirm, or indulged in drunkenness, was suspended during the bishop's pleasure; the mulct for fornication was raised; he who worked on a Sunday, or sacrificed to idols, or ate meat on a day of abstinence, was sentenced to the pillory, with leave, however, to redeem the punishment by money. But in most cases there was also a canonical penance, for which, in those days, there was no dispensation. And these laws are the first which mention compurgation by oath, though there can be no doubt that the custom had subsisted in England from the first invasion of Hengist. The word, however, of the king or bishop was to be

* *Leges Hlotharii et Eadrici*, 1—16. p. 7—9.

received without an oath. In these laws, theft is more severely visited : if a man were caught in the act, he might be killed with impunity ; if with the stolen property in his hands, the king was to decide whether he was to be put to death, or sold as a slave over the seas, or redeem his life by his were.*

The laws of St. Ina (688—728), king of the West Saxons, which are in number seventy-seven, are as remarkable as any of the preceding : assuredly some of them exhibit great and lamentable changes in Anglo-Saxon society. If any one took justice into his own hands, he was to restore what he had taken, and to pay a mulct of thirty shillings. That open robberies had greatly increased, is evident from the new distinctions applied to them. If seven of them were leagued together, they were called a company ; if from seven to thirty-five, a band ; if above thirty-five, an army ; and, what is singular enough, there was a graduation of punishment according as a robber belonged to any of these companies. If a thief were caught in the act, he might be killed ; but, as private animosity was to be guarded against, the slayer was obliged to prove, by oath, or by witnesses, that he had really caught the deceased offender in the act. If a man were guilty of theft, yet his wife and children were not privy to the fact, through regard to them he was permitted to redeem himself ; but, if they *were* privy, slavery was their portion. From the earnestness with which Ina legislates against crimes of this description, they must have incredibly multiplied. If a man passed through a wood, and did not the whole time either shout or wind a horn, he was to be regarded as a thief. If a slave were guilty, he was hanged, nor was it any longer in the power of the master to redeem him. Where a peasant was discovered selling stolen goods, he was to lose his hand or foot. These laws also acquaint us with some miscellaneous information worth our notice. If a parent did not cause his infant to be baptized within thirty days, he was mulcted thirty

* *Leges Wihtrædi*, p. 10—13.

shillings ; if the infant died before the celebration of the rite, he lost all his substance. From the frequency of homicide, and the anxiety of relatives to avenge a death, instead of accepting the were, increased severities were found necessary ; yet, in this reign, we find the privilege of sanctuary openly recognised : the murderer, by fleeing to a church, saved his life ; but he was still answerable for the legal compensation, and for the penalty ; that is, for the were and the wite. The wite varied according to the means of the culprit : if he were worth 200 shillings, it was 30 ; if 600, 80 ; if 1200, 120. In proportion, also, to his means was every man assessed towards the expenses of the state. That tribute was often paid in rural produce, — no doubt for the more convenient supply of the army and of the royal officers, — appears from the fact that he who possessed ten hides was required to furnish, whether annually, or once for all, is uncertain, 10 measures of honey, 300 loaves of bread, 12 amphors of Welsh ale, 10 geese, 20 pullets or hens, 10 cheeses, an amphor of butter, 5 salmon, 20 pounds of fodder, 100 eels, with a few sheep, &c. That the price of live produce was not very high, appears from the fifty-fifth law, which rates a sheep with young at one shilling. We must not forget to add, that in these laws we meet with the first mention of the ordeals by hot iron and water. Doubtless they were long before in use ; but, if they were observed by custom, they were, probably, not legally or canonically recognised before the reign of Ina.*

The laws of Alfred the Great (872—901), are derived partly from the preceding collections, partly from the yet unwritten observances of his people, partly from the book of Exodus : they are, however, much more severe than those of his predecessors, since in many cases they substitute the last penalty for the pecuniary mulcts which formed so leading a feature of the Germanic codes. Commencing with the decalogue, the

* *Leges Inæ*, 1—77. p. 14—27.

royal legislator proceeds at once to denounce the punishment of death against the deliberate homicide ; against him who should strike or curse father or mother ; against him who should bind and sell a freeman ; against the man guilty of bestiality ; against the witch ; against him who sacrificed to idols ; against the man who designed the death either of the king or of his own immediate lord. Sacrilege was doubly punished,—by the legal composition, and by the loss of the hand. He who fought, or drew his weapon, in the royal palace, might be put to death, or allowed to redeem his life, at the royal pleasure. If in the presence of an archbishop, the mulct was 150 shillings, of a bishop or senator, 100. The same prince increased the *mundbyrd* even of a peasant. If a man carried a spear so carelessly that it hurt any one, he was responsible for the mischief, and in an inferior degree for that committed by his dog. Bodily injuries, from a scratch on the shin to the loss of the most useful member, are to be compensated by a carefully graduated scale—in all cases that compensation being much higher than at any preceding period. Thus, the loss of an ear, 30 shillings ; of the nose, 60 ; of a front tooth, 8 ; of a thumb, 30 ; of the digit-finger, 15 ; of the arm, 80 ; and in regard to wounds, more or less, according to the extent of the damage. These mulcts are, in fact, identical in principle, often in amount, with those we have so carefully instanced on a former occasion* : we will not, therefore, repeat them. In regard to crimes against chastity, the royal legislator is no less minute, the mulct being always apportioned to the rank of the parties. The chastity of a wife of a twelve hundred shilling man—the twelve hundred, six hundred, and two hundred shilling men, may be classed with twelf-hind, six-hind, and two-hind men,—was rated at 120 shillings ; of a six hundred, at 100 shillings ; of a two hundred, at 40 shilling. If any one touched the breast of a ceorl's wife (a two hundred shilling man)

* See Vol. II. *Germanic Jurisprudence*.

the offence was compensated by 5 shillings; if he threw her down, by 10 shillings; if the act were completed, by 60 shillings, or 20 shillings more than if the thing happened with her own consent; but if she had been previously thus dishonoured, the mulct was reduced one half. If the female were a nun, the penalty was double. If a male ravished a female slave, he paid in his hide. If a man maliciously spread false reports, he lost his tongue. By the care with which Alfred displays the severe penalties exacted by the Jewish law, — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, skin for skin, — he would, evidently, fain introduce the talion among his subjects; and there is reason to believe that the talion was enforced where the offender was too poor to make pecuniary compensation; but, in regard to the rich, he was compelled to bend under necessity — to continue money payments in lieu of bodily chastisement.*

The laws of Edward the Elder (901—924), the son of Alfred, designed as supplementary or corrective of the preceding, are few but remarkable, since they evidently provide for the necessities of a more advanced state of society. By one, every man was prohibited from buying or selling outside the gates of a town (doubtless to escape the toll), or elsewhere than in the presence of the reeve. By another, he who was suspected of theft, was compelled to find a fidejussor, or to suffer what the court might decree. In a third, we first hear of incest, which was made penal both with the lay and the ecclesiastical tribunals: there is nothing said, however, of a common crime,—so common that the clergy had great difficulty in rooting it out,—where the son married the father's widow. From this silence we may probably infer that their efforts had at length succeeded. By a fourth, severe penalties are decreed against all who refuse church dues, such as tithes and Peter-pence. By a fifth, the freeman who laboured on the Sabbath lost his liberty; the slave suffered in his skin. By a sixth, a penalty was denounced against the man who failed to

* *Leges Ælfredi*, p. 28—46.

observe the fasts of the church ; the most remarkable one is that which raises the pecuniary estimate of a freeman, so as to comprehend the whole of his reputed substance. Thus, in the former reigns, the 1200 shilling man was legally estimated, for certain crimes, at 120, or one tenth of his property : the estimation, and consequently the mulct, are now increased tenfold.*

Passing over the laws of Athelstan, which have nothing striking beyond the distinction, before mentioned, between the oaths of men in different ranks of life, we come to the *Judicia Civitatis Lundoniæ*, decreed under the same monarch. These are chiefly curious as fixing the estimate, and consequently the were or compensation, of the different ranks of society, and that more minutely than by former kings. Thus, the were

Of the king was	-	-	30,000 thrymsas.†
Of an etheling, or king's son			15,000
Of a bishop	-	-	8000
Of an ealdorman		-	8000
Of a hold	-	-	4000
Of a high xerefa		-	4000
Of a mass-thane	-	-	2000
Of a world-thane		-	2000
Of a ceorl	-	-	266

The same laws contain regulations for the more ready administration of justice ; but they were of very partial benefit : we every where read of open violence, of secret fraud, of the laws evaded or defied : in fact, there was no security, except for the powerful ; no justice, except for the rich.‡

But, as we have before observed, pecuniary mulcts were not the only penalty under our Saxon ancestors ;

* *Leges Eaduardi*, p. 48—50. ; *Eaduardi et Gothruni*, 51—54.

† The thrymsa appears to have been three fourths of a Mercian shilling. Was it *three* pence, or *four* pence? It seems to have been one or the other. The Wessex shilling was five pennies, while the Mercian is believed to have contained four. From the time of the conquest only does the shilling appear to have contained twelve pennies.

‡ *Leges Æthelstani*, necnon *Judicia Civitatis Lundoniæ*, *passim*.

the church insisted that satisfaction should also be made to heaven for crimes, whether discovered by men or not. Thus, for homicide the culprit had not only to pay the were and the wite, but, in the tribunal of penance, to receive the obligation of a seven years' fasting,—three on bread and water, the remaining four according to the discretion of the priest. Even when the seven years were expired, he was enjoined perpetual contrition of heart, since he could not be certain how far his abstinence or confession might avail in the sight of God. If he *intended* only to commit the deed, yet were unable to effect his intention, three years' fasting were enjoined him; one on bread and water, the other two at the discretion of his confessor. The same penalty was his doom if he even unintentionally killed another; if the crime were meditated by an ecclesiastic, the term of penance was protracted; a subdeacon fasted six, a deacon seven, a priest ten, a bishop twelve years, and all were enjoined to mourn during the rest of their lives. If it were actually perpetrated, the culprit was degraded, bound, like any layman, both to make the pecuniary compensation, and to sustain the penance awarded by the church. If a woman procured abortion, or destroyed the infant after its birth, the canonical penalty was a ten years' fasting,—three on bread and water, with the obligation to mourning during life. If, in a fit of jealousy, a man beat his wife so that she died,—if she were innocent, he fasted ten years; if guilty, three, with the same obligation. If a man were guilty of the *nefanda venus*, the period was protracted to fifteen years,—to his whole life, if he had a wife and had attained the age of forty,—nor was he ever to be admitted to the Lord's supper. For adultery, the culprit, whether husband or wife, was constrained to fast three days a week during seven years. The man with two living wives was cut off from the communion, and was not even allowed to be buried in consecrated ground. Where the adultery was double, viz. where both offenders were married, the penance

was seven years' fasting, three on bread and water, with the obligation of perpetual mourning. If a woman after her husband's death married his brother, the penance was during life. For other crimes the punishment was proportionate ; it was often excommunication, — a doom which in those days was to be dreaded, since it rendered the object infamous, and placed him utterly beyond the pale of the law. The preceding extracts are sufficient to convince us that the union of ecclesiastical with civil penalties was exceedingly severe: if compensation was generally received for homicide, the advantage was more than counterbalanced by the canonical penance, by the obligation to perpetual mourning, and by never-ending remorse.*

The laws of Ethelred II. (979—1016) prove that the system of frankpledge was perfectly matured: the very first enacts that every man shall have a fidejussor. Most of them relate to the penalties awarded against those who broke the peace of the church, and to the formalities necessary in recurring to the ordeal. In most public acts, indeed, of this period, the church, its authority and immunities, occupy a prominent place.—The laws of Canute are of too miscellaneous a character to be detailed here. In general it may be observed of them, that they breathe an air of clemency which we should not have expected from a monarch so unscrupulous and bloodthirsty as Canute was in the earlier part of his life. Probably his object was to win the favour of his new subjects. The laws attributed to St. Edward the Confessor (1042—1066) exhibit an improvement in the social principle of combination: the union of men in a tything, of tythings in a hundred, of hundreds in a county, and the mutual responsibility of the members, are clearly enforced. The same laws, too, show a great advance in the principles of feudality ; they recognise the jurisdiction of the

* *Leges Eadgari, passim.*

barons, whether archbishops, bishops, abbots, ealdormen, sheriffs, or thanes; they assert the authority of local feudal jurisdictions, of sac and soc, no less than of the ordinary courts: in fact, they exhibit such an array of civil authority, such an ubiquity of civil power, that it may be doubted whether they are so ancient as the time of the Confessor. One thing they incidentally teach us, — that in England there was no such thing as uniformity of laws: in some counties the Danish, in others the Saxon, in others the Welsh, prevailed.*

No peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence is more striking than the *were*, or estimated value of a man's life, according to the station he filled in society.

“To explain the manner in which the *were* was demanded and paid, let us suppose that a thane of the twelfthind class had been murdered. The homicide might, if he pleased, openly brave the resentment of those whose duty it was to revenge the murder; or, he might seek to fortify himself against their attempts within the walls of his own house; or, he might flee for protection to one of the asylums provided by the law. In none of these cases were his enemies permitted to proceed immediately to the work of vengeance. The object of the legislature was, to gain time, that the passions might cool, and the parties be reconciled. If he were found in the open air, it was unlawful to put him to death, unless he obstinately refused to surrender. If he shut himself up in his house, it might, indeed, be surrounded, to prevent his escape; but a week must be suffered to elapse before any hostile attempt could be made. If he sought an asylum, the palace of a king, etheling, or archbishop, afforded him a respite of nine days; a consecrated church, and the house of an ealdorman or bishop, a respite of seven days. Sometimes he preferred to fight, and much innocent blood was shed; for it was the duty of the vassal, on such occasions, to serve his lord, and of the lord to hasten with his retainers to the aid of

* *Leges Æthelredi*, p. 102, &c. *Leges Canuti*, p. 122, &c. *Leges Edwardi*, p. 197, &c. From the difference in the state of society involved in the laws attributed to the Confessor, to that which prevailed at an earlier period, and from the identity of that state with the society of the Normans, we should certainly place their enactment at a period somewhat subsequent.

his vassal. Sometimes he surrendered himself a captive into the hands of his enemies, who were compelled to keep him unhurt for the space of thirty days. If, during that interval, he could procure sureties for the payment of his were, he was set at liberty: otherwise, his person and his life were abandoned to the mercy of his captors. When the were was offered, the following was the proceeding according to law. Twelve sureties, of whom eight were paternal, and four maternal relatives, of the murderer, gave bond for the faithful payment of the mulct; and immediately both parties swore on their arms "to keep the king's peace" towards each other. After the lapse of three weeks, 120 shillings, the heals fang, or price of liberation from captivity, were divided among the father, the sons, and the brothers of the slain. Three weeks later, an equal sum, under the name of manbote, was paid to the lord, as a compensation for the loss of his vassal. After another interval of three weeks, the fight-wite, or penalty for fighting, which differed in the amount, according to circumstances, was received by the king, or the lord within whose jurisdiction the murder had been committed. Another delay of twenty-one days was allowed before the first general payment of the were to all the relatives of the deceased, and these terms were amicably adjusted for the liquidation of the remainder by instalments in money or cattle. When the atonement was completed, the families were reconciled, and all remembrance of the offence was supposed to be obliterated.*

From the preceding glance at the chief peculiarities of the Anglo-Saxon administration and laws, it is impossible for us to form a very exalted idea either of their morals or of their wisdom. In no European country was homicide more frequent; in none, perhaps, was theft so common. These two heinous crimes were not confined to a district, — to the mountains of Wales, or the plains of Northumbria; the former inhabited by the most hasty, the latter by the most barbarous of people: they pervaded every county, and, what is worse, every class of society, from the highest to the lowest, among ecclesiastics as among laymen. Facts such as the following meet us at every page in the annals of this atrocious people: —

"Dirling was the ally of Bardulf, and yet he came and ravished his wife, and then killed Hakensen, her father.

* Lingard's England, i. 368.

These facts Bardulf declared himself ready to prove upon the offender by his body, or as a mayhend (maimed) man, or as a woman, or a clericus ought to prove.

"Cedde had a house with much corn and hay, and Wetod his father lived in it. But Harding came and set it on fire, and burnt Wetod in it.

"Cady was living in peace, when Carlin came, and with a sword ran him through the body, so that he died.

"One Knotting was lying maimed in his bed; another came, and carried him to a water ditch, or marl pit, and threw him into it, and there left him to die, without help or sustenance.

"Omond had a horse; Saxmund came and robbed him of it.

"Athælf was living in peace when Colquin came with violence, assaulted his house, and broke into it.

"Darliog was also living in peace, but Wiloe came, and arrested him without any right, took him away, and put him into stocks and irons.

"So Mainaword attacked Umbred, and cut off his foot.

"Olif with a weapon struck Barning, and wounded him.

"Atheling ravished Arneborough."*

If these were mentioned as occasional events, as happening only in extraordinary periods of anarchy, we should not notice them; but that they were of perpetual recurrence, is evident enough from the whole history, public or domestic, of this savage people. That theft and robbery were no less frequent, is abundantly proved by the same authority. Not a legislator of the Anglo-Saxons, from Ethelbert to the Confessor, but dwells prominently and earnestly on this crime. An equal proof of its frequency is to be found in the distinction as to the numbers of the bandits who associated together. We have before alluded to the several denominations of organised robbers, according as they appeared in bands of seven, or thirty-six, or upwards, — a distinction which speaks volumes as to the precarious state of society. That there should be a difference, also, in the punishment of a robber according to the number of his associates, appears founded in equity; as a large band would be able to commit much

* Extracted from Horne, as happening in the reign of Alfred. See Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, ii. 513.

more mischief than a small one, — to sweep not merely the property of a house, but of a village or district. Theft, however, was more frequent, because less dangerous than open depredation. “It prevailed among every order of men; we meet with it in the clergy as much as the laity; among thanes no less than ceorls.”* That ecclesiastics were, indeed, addicted to the crime, is clear enough from the canons of councils, which earnestly, but, as it appears, vainly, endeavoured to extirpate it: they might, and doubtless did, limit the mischief; but it was too obstinate, too stubborn, too unconquerable, to be rooted out. Though each succeeding legislator added to the severity of the existing laws; though the penalty was raised from a mere threefold reparation to inevitable death, and to a confiscation of the culprit’s substance, all would not do. It was probably this conviction of the inutility of enforcing the capital penalty, that induced Athelstan to mitigate it in two important points — that no thief under fifteen should suffer death, nor if the value of the thing stolen fell below a shilling. Canute altogether abolished the last penalty, substituting others, which, though lenient for the first offence, were, in subsequent cases, equally revolting to humanity: in the first instance there was merely a fine; in the second, the penalty was loss of the hand or foot; in the third of both; in the fourth, of the eyes, ears, nose, and upper lip. — Such was the moral state; the civil was no better. The distinction of classes, indeed, is inevitable; but why a noble or a rich man should suffer less than a poor one, why crime in the great should be venial, and fatal in the little, nobody could explain. The one, after perpetrating a deed, was assessed in a mulct which he was scarcely inconvenienced to pay; the other, unable to pay, was doomed to slavery or death. All the Germanic codes, it must be confessed, — the Wisigothic, the Burgundian, the Frank, the Lombard, the Saxon, the Suabian, no less than the Anglo-Saxon, —

* Lingard, i. 370.

are favourable to the rich and tyrannical to the poor ; but none of them, nor all of them combined, are in this respect so odious as that of our ancestors. From the haughty etheling, or ealdorman, down to the stupid clod who owned half a hide, all was artificial distinction, all odious usurpation of natural rights. In fact, the very worst parts of the continental codes, without many of their redeeming qualities, were adopted by the selfish barbarians of England. Severe as this reflection may seem, it is abundantly capable of proof : let any one examine, as minutely as we have done, the laws of these nations in the collections of Lindenbrog and others, and he will be constrained, if he have the least honesty, to confess that it is fully merited. To state the liberal qualities, the manly wisdom, the public virtue, of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, has been a favourite employment for declamation in a certain noisy assembly. Such declamation shows a deplorable ignorance of their character, their history, their institutions. They were neither liberal nor just ; they were neither wise nor virtuous. On the contrary, every remaining record proves that they were at once the most barbarous, the most selfish, the most bloodthirsty, unjust, odious, and yet despicable, of the European nations ; that they were destitute of all virtue, public or private. How such a horde of lawless savages contrived to escape mutual destruction by the violence or perfidy of each other, is a problem of impracticable solution. Their society was always disorganised ; but by some extraordinary means they contrived to preserve their existence as a people. What, doubtless, tended to their preservation, was the thorough conviction which each entertained of the other's character. It appears to have been the necessary policy of many to remove as far as possible from one another, — to choose an isolated abode, in the depths of the forest, or of the mountain, where, if not wholly inaccessible to hostility, the steps of the plunderer were less likely to wander. To those who lived in villages and hamlets, their system of frankpledge was admir-

ably adapted : it bound the householders in one common interest,—that of combining to resist the open violence of such bandit companies as were perpetually on the prowl. Nor must we lose sight of the influence of the priesthood, which was beneficially exercised : in fact, but for Christianity, the whole country, which was already one huge den of thieves, must, inevitably, have been depopulated ; nothing but it could have prevented them from indiscriminately butchering one another. There were saints, indeed, in the cloister,—some among the brightest in the monastic annals ; but, unfortunately, their example was unseen, and could have no influence beyond the walls of their seclusion.*

II. *From the Conquest to the Accession of Henry VII.*

On the Anglo-Saxon period we have dwelt more largely than we shall need to dwell on the present ; and this for two reasons : the former period is more extended, more complicated, and more interesting ; and it is, or is supposed to be, more closely connected with our prejudices as a people.

1066 In his patrimonial fief of Normandy, William the
to Bastard had exhibited qualities of a high order. While
1154. a minor, the rebellion of his chief barons had called his
powers into action : in his wars with rivals to the dukedom, of whom one was supported by his liege superior, the French king, he had compelled both that rival and this superior to sue for peace ; and by his conduct, both as a general and a civil governor, he had extorted the

* *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*, passim. Lindenbrog, *Codex Legum Antiquarum*, passim. Henneccius, *Elementa Juris Germanici* (in *Operibus*, tom. vi.). Strutt's *orda Angel-cynnan*, vol. i.

The plates of Strutt are as instructive as they are curious. There we see a number at table, served by attendants, probably slaves, *on their knees* ; yet, though they are served so orientally, the barbarians are grasping their food in their hands, just as an ape grasps a boiled potato. In another part we see one man drinking, another pledge to him ; that is, standing to protect him with a drawn knife or dagger. While in the act of drinking, a man was at the mercy of his fellows ; he therefore would not trust himself, unless some one stood over him to protect his life.

When we are told of Anglo-Saxon liberty and happiness, let us never forget the kneeling domestics and the armed pledges !

respect of the sovereigns of Europe. His valour in war, his wisdom in peace, his vigorous administration, his inflexible justice, and a certain grandeur of mind, had long caused him to be regarded as the greatest prince of his age. His astounding success in the invasion of England was not likely to lessen his reputation. But that success had been dearly purchased : the flower of his chivalry had found a premature grave ; and a grave would probably have been his own portion, had not continued dissensions, and hopeless imbecility, characterised the operations of his enemies after the great battle of Hastings. And even when the thanes and prelates had submitted, he had still to struggle with the antipathy of the people. It was long, indeed, his object to conciliate the favour of the vanquished, to punish with severity the excesses of his followers, and to reconcile the strangers and the natives ; but a scene at his very coronation, in which both parties proceeded to blows through a casual misunderstanding, showed him that his policy was not likely to succeed. Though his first measures were dictated by the greatest moderation ; though with a wise magnanimity, of which there are few examples in history, he eagerly cultivated the friendship of his rival, Edgar Atheling, in whom centered the hopes of England ; though he retained the ancient institutions of the country, introduced domestic tranquillity, administered justice with a rigorous impartiality, and encouraged agriculture and commerce ; the dissatisfaction still remained. Perhaps the salutary severity with which he enforced the observance of the laws was extremely disagreeable to the native thanes, who from time immemorial had set the royal authority at defiance, and proved themselves, within their respective districts, so many irresponsible tyrants. But there were other reasons sufficient to account for the national antipathy. The mercenary troops of William were lawless ; his nobles were haughty and rapacious ; and, as without their aid he could not hope to preserve his crown, he was inevitably compelled to secure their at-

tachment by extraordinary gratuities — to enrich them by exactions from the vanquished natives. Amidst the general, though smothered discontent, it is strange that William should leave the kingdom, to visit his hereditary dominions. He might have foreseen that his barons, no longer awed by his presence, would, by their insults and rapacity, widen the gulph between the two people. The consequences were such as ordinary foresight might have expected. Wounded in their pride, exasperated by real wrongs, and unable to obtain redress, the natives entered into a formidable conspiracy, with the princes of Wales and Scotland, to restore the Saxon line. The whole country was soon infested by armed bands, who, though they could not contend with the disciplined chivalry of Normandy, might yet soon annihilate, in detail, their odious victors. On receiving this intelligence, William returned. in the resolution of crushing, by severity, those whom kindness could not attach to his government. Though he found several provinces, especially Northumbria, in arms ; though the malecontents were aided by a powerful fleet from Denmark ; William triumphed over all opposition ; and, the better to keep the natives in check, erected impregnable fortresses in different parts of the kingdom. But mere success did not satisfy him ; the sternness of his soul demanded revenge : and in this spirit he literally wasted the whole country from the Ouse to the Tyne, burning the habitations, and putting the people to the sword. In this horrible destruction, 100,000 victims, women and children, no less than men, perished. During a full century, the desert waste attested his sanguinary disposition. This was not all : in the conviction that foreigners only were to be trusted, he had filled the administration, from the highest to the lowest offices, with them. He now began to introduce them into the church. To make room for them, he first deposed the English prelates ; with the inferior dignities he successively did the same ; and ended by dispossessing many of the parochial clergy. There can be no doubt that he had other

reasons for such severity. The English ecclesiastics were neither well informed, nor correct in their lives; and he might reasonably hide his revenge under the mantle of zeal for religion. It is certain that, with one or two exceptions, he exercised his patronage over the church with great discernment, and much to the benefit of the people. In his temporal policy he was less laudable. We have alluded to the rapacity with which he oppressed the natives to enrich his followers. The work appears to have been gradual. He first applied to that purpose the demesne lands and hereditary revenues of the crown. The forfeitures of the thanes who joined in the frequent rebellions — rebellions at which we have no room to glance — of his reign, supplied him with still ampler means. Of his own rapacity, no better proof need be adduced, than that he added to the domains of the crown no fewer than 1,432 manors in the different counties. The zeal with which he diffused the institutions of feudality, we shall here often have occasion to notice. But with all his vigilance, all his able policy, he had numberless obstacles to oppose, not merely from the hostility of the English, but from the discontent of his own barons; who were always turbulent, who could not witness without apprehension his rapid strides towards despotism, and who longed for the rest of the lands possessed by the English. He triumphed, however, over all: he forced the king of Scots to sue for peace; and, by his gold, he frustrated the designs of Canute, king of Denmark, who, with a formidable armament, sailed towards England, to claim the crown as grandson of Canute the Great. His last annoyance was from his eldest son, Robert, to whom he had broken a promise. This rebellion caused him much anxiety, but little trouble to repress. It was, doubtless, for this reason that, in his last will, he left Normandy only to that son, and expressed a wish that England might fall to his second son, William Rufus. No sooner had the breath of life left the body of this great monarch, than, — so little love had he been able to

inspire, — it was abandoned by all his attendants: by the meaner sort it was plundered; and at last hastily committed to the tomb by an obscure knight. — *William II.* (1087—1100), surnamed, from the colour of his hair, Rufus, or the Red, hastened from his father's yet breathing body, at Rouen, into England, to seize the crown, while his brother Robert, a dissipated prince, lost the golden opportunity by loitering at Abbeville. He was crowned without opposition. Robert, indeed, shook off his lethargy for a moment, to fight for the crown, and he had no difficulty in gaining partisans; but he was unfit to head any enterprise which required either firmness or coolness — still less when opposed to such a prince as his brother. In time, being deserted by his own adherents, and impoverished by his thoughtless profusion, he resolved to sell his brother, for a time, the government of Normandy, and join the crusade. For 10,000 marks, he accordingly surrendered the administration of the duchy during five years, and departed on the adventurous expedition. Like his father, William had to contend with rebellion; like him, too, he triumphed. In Northumberland, one of his earls defeated and slew king Malcolm of Scotland; and, though he could not subdue the insurgent Welsh, he restrained their incursions into his western marches. In his internal administration he was as violent as his father, and more rapacious. He had the worst without the good qualities of that great prince. It was his custom, on the vacancy of a see, or any other rich benefice, not to nominate a successor, but to retain for years the temporalities. Into the laws he introduced new penalties, redeemable by pecuniary mulcts, which enabled him to continue his debaucheries. Little restrained by moral principle, and without religious feeling, he was a sad scourge to the kingdom. His mysterious death in the New Forest, — a forest which his father had iniquitously planted, to enjoy, at the expense of the former inhabitants, the pleasures of the chase, — was, in the opinion of the time, a divine retribution. — As he died

without issue, the crown was usurped by *Henry I.* (1100—1128), the third son of the Conqueror. Robert, as the eldest son, was the undoubted heir; and the claims of that prince had been confirmed by a treaty between him and the deceased monarch. The first acts of an usurper are always popular. To win the favour of the church, Henry filled up the vacant sees, and promised that, in future, benefices should neither be sold nor continued vacant. To attach the native English, he published a charter of liberties, and circumscribed the power of his Norman earls: he restored the Saxon laws, and professed great respect for the liberties of the people. What rendered him much more popular with his English subjects, was his marriage with Matilda, a princess of the ancient house of Cerdic. By this means he was successfully enabled to contend with his brother Robert, who had just returned to Normandy from the crusades. He compelled that brother to conclude a peace, which he himself soon broke. In the second war, the unfortunate prince was captured, and doomed to perpetual imprisonment. This success enabled the king to unite Normandy with his crown. But to retain this usurped possession cost him dear: it raised against him powerful enemies, who took the part of a son of the captive Robert. Though he ultimately triumphed, his object sustained a fatal blow in the premature death, at sea, of his only son. By this event, his nephew, son of duke Robert, was the undoubted heir to the crown. To dissipate the hopes of this prince, Henry, on the death of his queen, contracted a second marriage; and, when he found no issue was to be expected from it, he resolved to settle the crown on his daughter Maud, or Matilda, widow of Henry IV. emperor of Germany. To that princess, oaths of fidelity were actually taken by the prelates, the great officers of state, and the chief tenants of the crown. With the view of securing her an able support, he next married her to Geoffrey, earl of Anjou, head of the powerful house of Plantagenet. On the death of his nephew without issue, the throne seemed

to be secure in his own immediate line.—On his death, however, a new claimant appeared, in *Stephen* (1135—1154), count of Boulogne, son of his sister *Adela*. As *Robert* had died a year before *Henry*, the undisputed heiress was now *Matilda* ; but *Stephen*, well knowing that the laws of succession had been disregarded in the case of his two predecessors, resolved, like them, to usurp the crown. Accordingly he hastened from his fief of Boulogne, and, on reaching London, was acknowledged by the giddy populace. *Winchester*, the bishop of which was his brother *Henry*, followed the example ; and he was hastily crowned by several prelates and barons who had sworn fidelity to *Matilda*. As he was deservedly more popular than any of his Norman predecessors, the nation quietly recognised his authority, and Normandy itself declared for him. But *Matilda* armed in defence of her rights, and in her cause king *David* of Scotland appeared in the field. In this, as in all their other expeditions, the Scotch displayed a ferocity which had been unrivalled since the invasions of the pagan Northmen. They devastated every district they approached ; every where consumed the habitations by fire ; and every where put the women and children, no less than the men, to the sword : the churches and monasteries perished with the other buildings. Within two miles of Northallerton was fought the battle of the Standard, which gave a terrible check to the barbarians : of 27,000 men, half perished in the battle and the pursuit. Peace with the Scottish king followed ; but *Matilda* proved a more formidable antagonist. Though she landed on the coast of Suffolk with 140 knights only, she was soon joined by numerous partisans. The civil war commenced, and, in the battle of Lincoln, *Stephen* became the prisoner of that princess. She quickly ascended the vacant throne ; but her qualities, whether of mind or heart, were not of a description to attach the nation to her sway. Incensed by her caprice, her haughtiness, her vindictive conduct, and ashamed of a woman's yoke, the people soon turned

an eye of pity towards the captive Stephen. In his behalf the civil war was renewed, which ended in the expulsion of Matilda. But a more dangerous competitor arose in Henry Plantagenet, son of Matilda, who had succeeded to the lordship of Anjou, had been acknowledged by Normandy, and, by marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine, had been invested with that extensive fief. Henry soon landed, to resume the war which his mother had been unable to manage, and was immediately joined by the partisans of his family. Again was the kingdom about to be deluged with blood, when the heads of the two rival parties met together, and agreed that Stephen should retain the crown during the rest of his life, and that Henry should succeed him. The king did not long survive this pacification. That his reign must have been most disastrous, is evident from the endless civil troubles, and from their inevitable accompaniment, the perpetual violation of the law. In fact, the country had not seen such horrors since the invasion of the Danes. On every side, castles arose, from which the owners could spread devastation on every side, and which, when pursued, afforded them a secure asylum. The favourite employment of these lawless barons was to surprise or capture, not only their personal enemies, but all who could pay a good ransom, — ecclesiastics no less than laymen. Some of them showed great ingenuity in the torments to which they subjected the prisoners who were unable or unwilling to promise an exorbitant ransom.*

The Norman line did not end with Stephen ; it only 1154 diverged into the house of Plantagenet, which, under to eight successive monarchs, swayed the sceptre of Eng- 1399.

* *Chronicon Saxonicum* (sub annis). Ingulphus, *Croylandensis Historia*, pp. 69—107. Petrus Blesensis, *Continuatio ejusdem*, pp. 108—129. *Chronica du Mailros*, pp. 160—167. *Annales de Margan* (sub annis). Fordun, *Scoti Chronicon*, lib. v. (variis capitulis). Simeon Dunelmensis, *Historia de Dunelm. Ecclesia*, lib. iii. (variis capitulis), lib. iv. cap. 1, 2, 3, 7. ; necnon *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, pp. 193—255. *Continuatio ejusdem per Johannem Priorem Hagulstaldensem*, pp. 258—282. Richardus Prior, *De Gestis Regis Stephani*, pp. 310—330. Ailredus Abbas, *De Bello Standardi*, p. 338, &c. Idem, *De Genealogia Regum Anglorum*, p. 366, &c. Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Gestis Anglorum*, lib. v. &c. Henricus Huntingdonensis, *Historia Anglicani*, lib. vii. et viii.

land.—*Henry II.* (1154—1189) was, beyond all doubt, the greatest prince of his age. By inheritance or marriage, even his Continental dominions were equal in extent to those of the French kings; and the abilities which he brought to the government, no less than his martial talents, rendered him truly formidable. To repair the disasters which had afflicted the reign of Stephen; to substitute for universal anarchy a vigorous administration of justice; to humble the powerful earls, who, within their respective jurisdictions, had long exercised the rights of sovereignty; to displace corrupt or tyrannical officers by honest moderate men; to reform the laws, the clergy, and the laity; were long the chief objects of his solicitude; and the success of his endeavours was proved by the tranquillity which he introduced into the kingdom. His disputes with the clergy respecting their immunities,—his attempts to subject ecclesiastics no less than laymen to his own tribunals,—were less triumphant; but to him must be awarded the praise of having given a fatal blow to such privileges of the church as were inconsistent with the well-being of the community. It must not be denied, that he endeavoured to stretch his prerogatives much further than the canon law allowed; that his evident object was to make the church slavishly dependent on the state. However, he effected much good; and for that, posterity must be grateful. But no man will fail to condemn the severity with which he enhanced his feudal prerogatives whenever opposition was made to his designs. His intemperate anger against Thomas à Becket, a prelate from whom indeed he had received great provocation; and the expressions which led to the murder of that celebrated churchman; his duplicity, when open violence was not likely to attain his object; are the chief stains on his memory. But that memory must ever be dear to England. He was not only an excellent ruler; he was also a valiant leader, though, from his characteristic caution, he never engaged in a rash enterprise. He humbled the Welsh and the Scotch;

and, through the enterprise of his knights, a portion of Ireland was added to his dominions ; he received in person the submission of the inhabitants. In his declining years, this great prince suffered much from the undutiful behaviour of his four sons — Henry, Richard, Geoffrey, and John. To these, according to the custom of the age, he intrusted so many fiefs. Henry, the eldest, who had married a daughter of the French king, was incited by his father-in-law to make the most monstrous demands ; his brothers were easily induced to make common cause with him ; and all were encouraged in their ingratitude by their mother, Eleanor. Their object, in fact, was to dethrone him ; nor did prince Henry scruple to purchase the assistance of the French king by the promise of Kent ; of the Scotch, by that of Northumberland. Fortunately for England, her monarch triumphed ; the king of Scots was taken prisoner ; and Louis of France compelled to make peace. But, though he thus forced his sons into the paths of duty, in a few years they again rebelled. Their conduct brought his grey hairs to the tomb. — To this able monarch succeeded *Richard I.* (1189—1199), by the death of prince Henry, the eldest of his sons. Richard was a brave, brutal, thoughtless, rash warrior ; fit enough for the “ iron harvests of the field,” but ill calculated to rule a country in peace. Most of his reign was passed in a crusade to the Holy Land, where his exploits struck terror into the Mohammedans. But, with the usual impetuosity of his character, he converted his allies into enemies ; and on his return, incognito, through Germany, he was arrested by one of them, Leopold, duke of Austria, and consigned to close imprisonment. His place of retreat was at length discovered by his subjects ; and though his brother John, whom he had left regent during his absence, and his implacable enemy the French king, endeavoured to prolong his captivity, the emperor and the states of Germany consented to his ransom. As a warrior only, has Richard any title to our respect ; as a monarch, he was one of the

worst that ever afflicted England. His reign was sullied by the massacre of the Jews, and by the most intolerable rapacity.—As he died without issue, the detestable *John* (1199—1216) succeeded to the throne. Yet John was not the right heir: Arthur, duke of Brittany, as the son of Geoffrey, an elder brother of John, had, doubtless, a better claim; but in these ages the legitimate laws of succession were little regarded. We have before related the transactions of this wretched monarch with the kings of France, and the loss of his continental possessions.* In his internal government he was equally unfortunate. One of his first measures was to quarrel with the pope, Innocent III., about the choice of an archbishop for the see of Canterbury; and, consequently, to subject the country to an interdict. It was followed by excommunication, and by a circumstance much more to be dreaded,—the preparations of France to invade the kingdom. In this extremity, John sought a reconciliation with the pope, to obtain whose favour he basely professed himself a vassal of the holy see. But his own barons were his most formidable enemies. That they had much reason to be dissatisfied with the despotism of the crown, is indisputable; but it is no less clear that one of their chief objects was wholly to emancipate themselves from royal authority. At Runnymede they extorted from him a charter, which has been regarded as the foundation of English liberty. Its provisions were evidently designed to soften the rigour of the feudal prestations due by vassals to their superior lord; but it also contained several favourable to the rights of the subject. For example, it was decreed that no Englishman should be arrested or condemned without accusation and the judgment of his peers. It recognised in cities and boroughs the exercise of certain ancient customs and privileges, involving an exemption from the more oppressive feudal exactions. It abrogated or modified the forest and other oppressive laws.

* See Vol. II. *History of France*.

But it was not so useful from the immediate benefits which it conferred, as from affording to future ages a monument of successful resistance to oppression. John, however, whose character was equally composed of two ingredients—cowardice and dissimulation—had no intention of observing its provisions. He soon evaded their fulfilment; his barons again armed; to oppose them, he hired mercenaries from the Continent; but they were not intimidated, even when excommunicated by the pope, who, as the pretended feudal superior of John, annulled the charter, on the ground of its having been extorted by violence. But their indignation hurried them into everlasting infamy; from patriots they were transformed into traitors, in offering the crown of England to Louis of France. With an army Louis arrived, was joined by his partisans, and a civil war commenced. At its height, this monarch died, leaving a character deformed by the most odious vices, unredeemed, perhaps, by a single virtue.—His eldest son, *Henry III.* (1216—1272), who succeeded in such difficult circumstances, was only ten years of age. At his accession, Louis reigned in the south, the barons were every where independent, and the royal power was but a shadow. In a short time, however, the good sense of the nation reverted to its usual channel; Louis was forsaken by his English allies; and the triumph of Henry followed. But, like his father, he had to contend with his barons, who demanded greater privileges than had ever been required by their forefathers. Though the king armed in defence of his rights, he could not prevail against an organised body: for a time, the royal authority was virtually exercised by a self-constituted council, headed by Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. When the people found that the new government was more haughty, more rapacious, and less paternal, than that of their monarch, many hastened to join him in his attempts to regain his legitimate power. But the whole of his eventful reign proved, that, though his virtues would have adorned any

station, he was unequal to the task of governing a turbulent nobility. Hence it was one continued scene of troubles. It was, however, distinguished by some good : he ratified, and even extended, the charter of his father ; he consented to admit knights from each shire, and burgesses from each corporation, into the national parliament.—Of a widely different character was his son, *Edward I.* (1272—1307), one of the greatest princes that ever swayed a sceptre. On the death of his father, Edward was absent on the crusade. On his arrival, which the family of De Montfort appear to have done all in their power to prevent,—not even scrupling to hire assassins for his destruction,—he found the kingdom in no enviable state ; on every side was anarchy aggravated by hostilities from the Welsh and Scots. His first care was to chastise his enemies. Instead of aiming, as his predecessors had done, to extend his precarious dominions on the Continent, his dearest object was for ever to break the power of his troublesome neighbours. — 1. His first expedition into Wales was successful. His vassal, Llewellyn, who had revolted, he completely subdued, yet suffered him still to reign as a dependent prince. Insensible of the generosity with which he had been treated, the Welshman soon afterwards rebelled : his temerity cost him dear ; in another invasion he lost his life, and with him perished the last vestige of Welsh independence : it had, in fact, no longer a separate existence, but was incorporated with England, divided into counties, and subjected in some respects to the English forms of administration. This important conquest was most useful to England, nor less so to Wales itself, which from this period made rapid advances in civilisation and happiness. If Edward was often irritable, he was never deliberately cruel : and the massacre of the bards, which the poet Gray has immortalised, may be classed with the fables of their countryman, Geoffrey. 2. In regard to Scotland, the efforts of Edward, though equally vigorous and well planned, were

thwarted by circumstances which no prudence could have prevented. That Scotland had been feudally subject to England during three or four centuries, is certain: her kings had often done homage to the ancestors of Edward; so that, in default of direct heirs to the Scottish throne, he was justifiable enough in claiming, as a right, the decision as to which of the competitors should reign.* How, in virtue of his superiority, after a long and patient examination, Edward declared in favour of Baliol; how Baliol did homage to his superior lord of England; and was put in possession of the kingdom; how, after a time, he found his dependent condition too galling to be borne, and was persuaded to take up arms; how Scotland was immediately at the feet of Edward; Baliol himself dethroned, and consigned to the Tower of London;—are facts too well known to require relation. During his life, Edward was the lord of Scotland; had that life been somewhat protracted, or had his son possessed half his talents, Scotland would have been incorporated with England as completely as Wales itself. In the last year of his reign, however, the rebellion of Robert Bruce again summoned him to the field; Bruce precipitately fled; but, on his death at Boughs on the Sands, his son, *Edward II.* (1307—1327), commenced a reign fatal to the glory of the kingdom. Defeated by the Scotch, abandoned to dissipations with worthless favourites, he lost Scotland, endangered Ireland, and won the contempt of his people. Relying on this general feeling, a few prelates and barons, after beheading his favourites, entered into a conspiracy to dethrone him. His son, scarcely emerged from childhood, was proclaimed by them and the giddy populace; he himself was dethroned and murdered in Berkeley Castle, at the instigation of the queen's paramour,—perhaps of the queen herself.—*Edward III.* (1327—1377), during his long reign of half a century, was

* This fact is abundantly proved by Lingard, vol. ii. note, p. 408. (4th. edit.)

chiefly occupied in the war with France, to the crown of which, as we have before related*, he advanced a claim in right of his connection with the royal family of that kingdom. Notwithstanding his splendid successes, and those of his son the Black Prince, at his death he could not boast of having derived much advantage from them.—As the Black Prince preceded him to the tomb, the succession devolved on the son of the latter, *Richard II.* (1377—1399), whose reign was as disastrous, and whose death was as tragical, as those of Edward II. Despised by his subjects as one who was hurrying the whole realm to ruin, a few factious nobles in the interests of Henry, duke of Lancaster, grandson of the late king, whom Richard had banished, recalled that nobleman to undertake the government. When Henry landed, he was joined by the whole kingdom: Richard, who had taken refuge in Wales, was betrayed, led to London, made to sign an act of resignation, and consigned to safe custody, while Henry of Lancaster was raised to the vacant throne. To a deposed king, short is the distance between the dungeon and the tomb. In Pontefract Castle, this last of the Plantagenets perished—no doubt violently—though the manner of his death must ever remain a mystery.†

But it is high time to abandon this barren summary of events, for a subject more important and interesting,—the institutions and character of our ancestors under the Norman and Plantagenet dynasties, viz. from 1066 to 1399.

If the conquest of England be considered in its consequences, apart from those prejudices with which the consideration is too often connected, it will be found to

* See Vol. II. *History of France.*

† *Chronica de Mailros*, pp. 167—242. *Annales Monasterii Burtonensis*, pp. 251—444. *Continuatio Historiæ Croylandensis*, pp. 451—477. *Thomas Wilkes, Chronica*, pp. 29—128. *Annales Waverleiensis*, p. 159, &c. *Richardus de Diceto, Imagines Historiarum*, p. 574, &c. *Bromton, Chronicon* col. 1043—1282. *Gervase, Chronica*, col. 1283—1626. To these may be added, *Matthew of Westminster*, *Roger Hoveden*, *Henry of Huntingdon*, and *William of Malmesbury*, in passages which it would be troublesome and useless to specify.

have much evil, but more good. The evil lay in the blood which was shed, in the tyranny of the crown, in the rapacity of the Norman barons, in the violent transfer of the territorial property from the natives to the new comers, in the disruption of all the social ties ; the good lay, first, in the elevation of the national character by the union of the Normans and Saxons. In a preceding part of this chapter, we have sufficiently alluded to the degradation of the latter people : sunk in some of the worst vices of barbarism, without patriotism, without respect for the laws, thievish, sanguinary, and perfidious ; despising all intellectual refinement, yet without morals to counterbalance the curse of ignorance ; with a society marked by insolent distinctions, and with a code of penalties insultingly adopted to the gradations of rank ; our Saxon ancestors had as little claim to the respect of their contemporaries, as they have to that of posterity. In several of the Norman historians, we meet with expressions of the utmost contempt, both for their manners and principles. If the victors were tyrannical and rapacious, they were yet not without chivalrous sentiments : if they were cruel, they were not deceitful ; if they were rapacious, they were not mean ; if they were convivial, they were not beastly debauchees ; if vindictive, they were capable of generosity : their hearts were thought true, and they were certainly pervaded by deep religious feelings. The best contrast that could be exhibited by the two people, was on the night preceding the battle of Hastings, in which Harold lost, and William won, a crown ; by the English, it was passed in licentious feasting and mirth, by the Normans in fasting and prayer. The amalgamation of the victors with the vanquished could not fail to benefit the latter—to elevate them, by slow but sure degrees, in precisely the same manner as the Italians were elevated by their Lombard masters.* In the second place, that numerous class of society, the slaves and villeins, whom the Saxons had treated with such severity, derived immense benefit

* See Vol. I. *History of Lombardy*.

from this salutary revolution. When William ascended the throne of the Confessor, he found them exactly on a level with the beasts of burden ; but by his laws he soon gave them rights : they were no longer permitted to be deprived by their superiors of their land, so long as they fulfilled the conditions in which they had received it ; their services were defined, they were forbidden to be sold ; and easy facilities were provided for the complete emancipation of even the most degraded. That the monarch emancipated many of the serfs on the crown lands ; that, when freed, he protected their new state, by severe penalties, from the encroachments of the other orders ; that he laid the foundation of much greater liberty than had ever yet been enjoyed in the island, are apparent from his laws. The vigour which he introduced into the internal administration, especially into that of justice, is another of the benefits which the kingdom derived from him ; even the Saxon chronicle, by whatever natives it was written, allows that, “ amongst other things, the good peace which he made in the land is not to be forgotten ; so that a man who had property of his own might go unhurt over the kingdom, with his bosom full of gold ; and no man durst slay another, though he had done ever so much evil against him.” The vigilance, indeed, with which he restrained the excesses of the nobles is most honourable to his character : in fact, it is frankly admitted by a writer hostile to him, that one great cause of the antipathy which the English thanes had to him, was to be sought in the firmness of his government ; that they were no longer permitted to set the laws at defiance, and to act as so many sovereigns within their respective districts. A fourth, and by far the greatest benefit resulting from the Conquest, was the improvement in the state of religion ; the Norman ecclesiastics introduced into the country were men distinguished both for morals and learning ; and, in this respect, they formed a striking contrast to the ignorant and vicious native priests : their example had the same effect on the English clergy as that of

the temporal barons on the English thanes : it created not only the desire, but the necessity, of superior attainments ; and it introduced greater strictness of life, and, consequently, greater zeal in the service of the altar. Nor, among these benefits, must we omit to place the increased security of the kingdom. The Saxon monarchs were unable to defend it against the Scandinavians : almost every year witnessed a new descent ; but these ferocious pirates respected the power of the Normans : the most formidable fleet they ever equipped forebore to trouble his repose. These united benefits, especially the impulse given to the native character, the first stage in the national regeneration, must compel the philanthropist to hail the Norman conquest of England as a blessing, not, indeed, unmixed,—for what human good *is* unmixed?—but as a mixture in which, though there was evil, the good, beyond all comparison, preponderated. The truth is, that, in time, the character of a nation, like that of a family, deteriorates, unless an extension be given to its relations : and we may doubt whether the welfare of every state do not require its subjugation by another twice at least in a millenium.*

Though the Conqueror confirmed the Saxon laws, with the exception of such alterations as were required by different circumstances, or an improved policy ; though he had the same courts of justice, and continued the witena-gemot in the Norman parliaments ; though he retained the shire government by earls and sheriffs, and in general professed an intention to preserve the Saxon institutions, yet, such was the inevitable tendency of events, a great difference was soon perceptible in the state of the kingdom before and after the Conquest. 1. Not the least curious feature of this difference was, the anomaly of a native population with a foreign sovereign : hierarchy and nobility ; every earl and bishop, every great vassal and dignitary, was a Norman. 2. If the barons received princely grants

* Chronicon Saxonicum, p. 295. Leges Wilhelmi Conquistoris, p. 228, &c. Doomsday Book, *passim*.

from the gratitude or the policy of the sovereign, they in their turn were no less liberal to others : they divided their domains among their military companions or knights, on the same conditions, of military service, and of suit in their baronial courts. In this system of sub-infeudation, most of the barons were exceedingly lavish — even to prodigality. Thus, though the earl of Kent had received above 200 manors in that county, he gave away all but twelve. The Earl of Hereford was still more thoughtless ; and more than once his inattention to his personal interests drew on him the expostulations of his sovereign. All were fond of being accompanied by a great number of armed knights.

3. The institution of knight-fees is a third peculiarity of the Norman sway.

“ Whether the institution of knights’ fees,” says Lingard, “ was originally devised, or only introduced by the policy of the Conqueror, may perhaps be doubted. It is, indeed, generally supposed, that he brought it with him from Normandy, where it certainly prevailed under his successors ; but I am ignorant of any ancient authority by which its existence can be proved, either in that or in any other country, previously to its establishment in this island. William saw that, as his crown had been won, so it could be preserved only by the sword. The unceasing hostility of the natives must have suggested the expediency of providing a force which might at all moments be prepared to crush the rebellious, and overawe the disaffected ; nor was it easy to imagine a plan better calculated for the purpose than that which compelled each tenant in chief to have a certain number of knights or horsemen always ready to fight under his banner, and obey the commands of the sovereign.”

But we do not think, as this excellent writer appears to do, that knight-fees are of so modern a date as the Conquest : they are certainly as old as the time of Hugh Capet.

“ The tenants in chief imitated their sovereign in exacting from their retainers the same free service which the king exacted from them. Thus, every large property, whether it were held by a vassal of the crown, or a sub-vassal, became divided into two portions of unequal extent. One the lord

reserved for his own use, under the name of demesne; cultivated part of it by his villeins; let out parts to farm, and gave parts to different tenants, to be holden by any other than military service. The second portion he divided into parcels, called knight's fees, and bestowed on military tenants, with the obligation of serving on horseback, at his requisition, during the usual period. But in these sub-infeudations, each mesne lord was guided solely by his judgment or caprice. The number of knights' fees established by some was greater, of those established by others, was smaller, than the number of knights whom they were bound to furnish by their tenures. Thus, the bishop of Durham and Roger de Burun owed the crown the same service, of ten knights; but the former had enfeoffed no fewer than seventy, the latter only six. The Conqueror saw that the prelate had always more than sufficient to perform his service; while Roger was compelled to supply his deficiency with hired substitutes, or the voluntary attendance of some of the freeholders on his demesne."

The term of service both for lay and ecclesiastical barons was forty days. 4. A fourth remarkable difference between the policy of the Saxons and Normans lay in the fact that, whereas under the former an oath of fealty was due by the vassal to the lord only from whom he immediately held, under the latter, even the sub-tenants were compelled to swear fealty to him. Thus, while the French kings and the German emperors had no feudal authority over the vassals of their tenants in capite, William, in 1085, convoked at Salisbury all who possessed even a knight's fee, with their baronial superiors, and exacted immediate homage from both. This was one of the circumstances which, in England, extended the power of the crown more than in any other country where the feudal system prevailed. Another, and a greater, was, that baronial fiefs were the concession of the conqueror. In Germany and France they were won by the swords of the possessors, who could consequently regard them as their lawful conquests, independent of the crown; but in England they were the spontaneous gift of the monarch. Hence it was that the Norman kings could dictate other conditions

than those of military service — that they could exact some with which the barons of no other country would, for a moment, have complied. Thus, the tenants in capite were compelled to attend the court of their sovereign, not only when summoned, but always on the great festivals. Wherever the sovereign might be, when attended by them, he was in the midst of his parliament. Again, the relief, or, as it was called by the Saxons, the heriot, — the sum paid to the lord when any vassal entered on a fief, even by hereditary right, — was felt to be galling, since, though its amount ought to have been fixed and permanent, a powerful monarch could often exact what he pleased. Aids, which, according to feudal lawyers, could be demanded on four occasions, — when the feudal lord paid a relief; when he married his eldest daughter; when his eldest son was knighted; when he himself was a prisoner, — were of the same indeterminate character: on these occasions the lord levied on his tenants almost whatever sum he pleased: generally to the full extent of their ability. In these demands the Norman kings, who were virtually irresponsible, were very rigorous. Two other abuses, which were carried to a much greater extent in England than anywhere else, were, wardship and marriage. When the heir to a baronial fief was under age, his education was not suffered to remain in the care of his kindred: to render him more fit for discharging the great condition of military service, he was immediately transferred to the court of his lord, to be there intructed in the martial exercise of the age. This in itself was not unreasonable: the evil consisted in the lord, during the period of minority, appropriating to himself the revenues of the fief. When the heir was a female, the lord could lay claim, not only to the wardship, but to the right of disposing of her in marriage. As she was incapacitated by her sex from fulfilling the military obligation, his interest required that her hand should be conferred on some one who could: — who so able to judge of a husband's military qualifications as the superior himself?

But if, theoretically, the plea had some foundation in justice, in practice, it was an intolerable abuse. The lord did not scruple to sell the hand of the heiress to the highest bidder, or he conferred it on some needy relation, without much regard to congeniality of age or condition; if she refused the man thus provided for her, she was compelled to remain under the wardship of her superior, who continued to have the complete disposal of her revenues; if she married without his consent, she lost her fief. 5. The administration of justice presents us with other innovations. In the king's court the members were no longer Saxons, but all Normans; in the lower courts, the president and assessors were equally foreigners; and the proceedings and judgment were in the Norman tongue. To exclude the natives from all share in the administration of the laws by which they were governed, was exceedingly galling to them. A worse evil was the increased severity of the penalties in these courts. Under the Saxon kings, every crime had its determinate pecuniary mulct: now the estate of the delinquent was placed at the mercy of his lord; who could resume any portion, or even the whole of it. The rigour of this innovation was, no doubt, intended to meet a crime that was become alarmingly common — the assassination of Normans by the vindictive natives. There was now an almost insuperable difficulty in discovering the culprit: the homicide, if committed on one of so odious a nation, was considered by the people as a meritorious, rather than a criminal act; nor were they backward to conceal him from the pursuits of justice. The natural remedy was to visit the tithing or hundred with a given penalty, provided the offender were not surrendered within a given space of time. This law, indeed, is to be found among those ascribed to the Confessor; but that it, like many others in the same collection, was enacted *after* the Conquest, appears certain. Again, under the Saxons, the fiery ordeal, as we have before related, was solemnly admitted among

judicial proofs. But the Normans despised it, and substituted wager of battle, as more worthy of free warriors. But, if both parties in the suit were of the same nation, they were permitted to abide by their respective customs: if Saxons, by the ordeal; if Normans, by open combat. Another and greater innovation consisted in the separation of the ecclesiastical from the secular tribunals. Though throughout the rest of Europe the bishops had their own courts, where they decided in causes appertaining to their spiritual jurisdiction, in England they had possessed no other court than that of the hundred, even for the decision of ecclesiastical causes. By the Conqueror they were forbidden to appear in them, and were commanded to erect tribunals of their own; and, lest their citations should be disregarded, the civil power was commanded to enforce them. In fact, the bishop had previously been as much the judge, even in temporal matters, as the ealdorman or sheriff; his jurisdiction was, therefore, greatly circumscribed, when he was commanded to take cognizance only of ecclesiastical affairs. Whether this innovation was for good or for evil, has been much disputed; on the one hand, the clergy were rendered independent of the secular power; on the other, the baronial judges, who succeeded the prelates, were much more rapacious, often violent and unjust. It is certain that, after this exclusion of the church dignitaries, the courts of the hundred lost their hold on the favour of the people.

“These innovations,” says the most able of all our historians of England, “will, perhaps, dispose the reader to conclude that the partiality or interest of William led him to new model the whole frame of Anglo-Saxon polity; but the inference is not warranted by the fact. As the northern tribes were all propagated from the same original stock, so their institutions, though diversified by time, and climate, and accident, bore a strong resemblance to each other, and the customs of the conquerors were readily amalgamated with those of the conquered. Of all the feudal provisions enforced by the Normans, there is not, perhaps, one of which some obscure traces may not be discovered among the Anglo-Saxons. The victors might ex-

tend or improve, but they did not invent or introduce them. The ealdorman of former times, the greater and lesser thanes, the ceorls, and the theowas, seem to have disappeared ; but a closer inspection will discover the same orders of men existing under the new names of counts or earls, of barons, knights, and esquires, of free-tenants, and of villeins and serfs. The national council, though it hardly contained a single native, continued to be constituted, as it had been formerly, of the principal landed proprietors, the immediate vassals of the crown : it assembled at the same stated periods ; it exercised the same judicial and legislative powers. The administration of justice was vested in the ancient tribunals—the king's court, the shire-motes, hundred-motes, and hall-motes ; the statutes of the Anglo-Saxon kings, with the provincial customs known by the name of West-Saxon law, Mercian law, and Northumbrian law, were repeatedly confirmed : and even the rights and privileges of every smaller district and petty lordship were carefully ascertained, and ordered to be observed.”*

Such was the administration of justice, — we do not notice the laws, which are nearly identical with those of the Saxons, — such the government of England, in the time of the Conqueror : such it continued under his immediate successors. The system was found wanting, partly through the usurpations of the crown, partly through the corruption of the functionaries. The king frequently withdrew causes from the tribunals of the manor, the hundred, and the county, to take cognizance of them himself ; and his appellant jurisdiction was unquestioned. Unfortunately, however, the love of right was seldom the motive which induced him to interfere with the course of law : it was generally a present from one of the litigant parties that awakened his slumbering sense of justice. Sometimes, indeed, he instituted rigid enquiries into the conduct of the feudal judges ; but, even when convicted by the clearest testimony of injustice, it did not necessarily follow that they would be visited with severe punishment. Thus, when Henry II. caused an inquest to be held, in every county, into the

* *Chronicon Saxonicum*, p. 295., and in many other places. *Leges Wilhelmi Conquistoris*, in a great variety of passages. *Ingulfus Historia*, p. 88, &c. *Bracton, De Legibus Angliæ*, lib. i. & ii. *Lingard, History of England*, vol. i. p. 423, &c. *Hallam, State of Europe*, vol. ii. part ii. chap. 8.

conduct of the local magistrates, and found numerous instances of glaring injustice, he deposed them, indeed, but only to restore them on the payment of heavy fines. For these fines they would not fail — no doubt they were authorised by the royal tacit permission — soon to reimburse themselves. We have little reason to infer, that even the monarch always administered justice with impartiality. His assessors, indeed, — the earls, prelates, barons, and great officers of state, — were often a check on him, and sufficient to prevent the grosser acts of corruption ; but, in general, few of them would be bold enough to contradict him as judge in his own court. Still less, when he appeared, as he often did appear, in the character, not of judge, but of plaintiff, would either the assessors, or the personage he appointed to preside, hold the scales of justice even between him and the other suitor. Let us never forget that the Norman kings and their successors were despotic ; that they had no curb on their tyranny, no court which could call on them to answer for their conduct. In Germany, the diet ; in France, the *cours plénières* ; in Spain, the *cortes*, held a greater or less check over the proceedings of their sovereigns ; but, at the head of a formidable military force, the English king, the *rex dominus et proprietarius* of the realm, could do what he pleased among his subject vassals. In the royal court, the usual penalty on conviction was placing the culprit “ at the king’s mercy ;” that his goods and chattels were forfeited, unless — which, indeed, often happened — the monarch graciously condescended to accept a fine by way of compromise. When the king was not present, the royal court was presided by the chief justiciary, assisted by the chancellor, the treasurer, the constable, the chamberlain, the marshal, and the steward, with equal powers ; and, to remedy the ignorance of these men, all whom, except the two first, were mere military barons, a certain number of “ clerks learned in the law ” were admitted to the deliberations. The powers of this tribunal were ample, since they embraced all those which were subsequently divided among

three distinct courts—the king's bench, the common pleas, and the exchequer. Ere long, however, the business connected with the royal revenues was detached from the rest, and, though intrusted to the same judges of the royal court, was yet transacted at a different time and in a different part of the palace: hence, it was soon termed a distinct court—that of the exchequer. Nor was it long before the latter court took cognizance of civil suits. Both courts appear to have had business enough: which proves, either that the courts of the shire, the hundred, and the manor were fallen into disrepute, or that the people were grown much more litigious than in ancient times: probably both causes were at work. These courts were occupied with the more important suits; for, as no cause could be carried into them without the payment of a fine, the justice which they administered would be inaccessible to the poor. Next to the king's court, that of the exchequer is indisputably the most ancient in our judicial system. At first, it was established at Winchester; but was soon transferred to London, to be nearer the king's person. But this tribunal was too distant to superintend frauds against the revenue, and the enforcement of fines, in the rest of the kingdom: no stationary court could possibly answer this purpose. The sagacity of Henry II. instituted "barons errant," or itinerant judges, to visit every county in the kingdom. Similar commissioners had, indeed, been sometimes despatched by former monarchs; but Henry had the glory to form them into a permanent periodical system. In a great council, at Northampton, he divided the kingdom into six circuits, very nearly corresponding with their present dimensions, and over each circuit he appointed three itinerant judges. What was the extent of their jurisdiction? According to a celebrated modern historian it was ample enough.

"They were authorised and directed to look after the king's interest to the best of their power; to hold pleas of the crown, provided the value did not exceed half a knight's fee; to *try malefactors of all descriptions*; to receive the oath of fealty to

the king from all earls, barons, knights, freemen, and villeins; to enquire what wards there were, or ought to be, in the guardianship of the king, their sex and quality, the present possessors, and the value of their estates; what females were, or ought to be, at the disposal of the crown; whether they were married or not, and if married, to whom, by whose permission, and what was the rental of their property; what churches were in the gift of the crown, their situation and annual value, who were the incumbents, and by whom they were presented; what lands had lapsed to the crown, who held them, and what was their value, what their tenure; what encroachments had been made on the royal forests or demesnes; who had violated the statutes respecting weights and measures; what sheriffs and bailiffs had recovered fines of defaulters; what was become of the chattels of Christian, or of the chattels, pledges, debts, and deeds of the Jewish, whores after death; and, lastly, to enquire into the state of the coinage, the clipping of the coin, the exchange, burglaries, outlawries, the removal of markets without license, the introduction of new customs, and the taking of bribes to exempt tenants from provisioning the royal castles."

Ample as were the powers of these ambulatory judges, — since by legal ingenuity all crimes may be connected with the exchequer; just as some casuists derive all the moral virtues from one, — we may yet doubt whether they extended to such multifarious objects. If they took cognisance of all descriptions of malefactors, what remained for the employment of the local courts, which we know were not originally superseded by the new tribunals of assize? *

The two courts before mentioned — the royal court or king's bench, and the exchequer — were not the only ones in existence in the time of Henry II. or of his immediate descendants. The court of common pleas, according to Madox, existed in the reign of Richard I.: it was certainly in being during that of John, since its authority is recognised in the fourth clause of Magna Charta. It took exclusive cognizance of all *civil* disputes, where the interests of the king were not concerned. But, if he was no party in the suit, if even his

* *Leges Henrici Primi*, pp. 234—283. Spelman, *Codex Legum Veterum*, pp. 299, &c., 309, &c., 313, &c. Bracton, *De Legibus Angliæ*. Madox, *History of the Exchequer* (*varii capitibus*). Lingard, *History*, vol. ii. p. 129, &c.

rights were not indirectly involved, he was yet resolved to profit by the litigious temper of the suitors.

“ Whether an action was commenced or discontinued, hastened or retarded, terminated or carried before a higher tribunal, the monarch, at each step, required a present, or fine, from one or both of the parties. Before the pleadings began, it was always necessary to pay a sum of money to the treasurer, and frequently to enter into a bond to double the amount, in the event of a favourable judgment. In actions for debt, the plaintiff was compelled to promise a portion of such sum or sums as he might chance to recover; and this portion was fixed, by a preliminary negotiation, often at one half, seldom at less than one fifth, of the whole demand. It was universally understood, that money possessed greater influence than justice in the royal courts; and instances are on record in which one party has made the king a present to accelerate, and the other, by a more valuable offer, has succeeded in retarding, the decision. If the defendant was opulent, he could easily defeat the just claim of an indigent plaintiff; unless the latter obtained the aid of powerful friends. By paying a large fine, the rich man might purchase a writ forbidding him to answer at all; or he might obtain a charter exempting him from the jurisdiction of all other magistrates, and permitting him to plead before none but the king in person. That such practices were incompatible with the equal administration of justice, is most evident; yet the writers of the age do not mention them in terms of reprobation. They had prevailed to a certain extent under the Anglo-Saxon princes; and men seemed to have been reconciled to the iniquity of the thing on account of its antiquity. But, besides the fines paid to the sovereign, the judges often exacted presents for themselves; and loud complaints existed against their venality and injustice. Henry, who did not admire in others that love of money which he cherished in his own breast, laboured to remedy this abuse. All the itinerant judges, within three years after their appointment, were removed, with the sole exception of Ranulf de Glanville; who, at the head of five others, was now commissioned to administer justice in the counties north of the Trent. The rest of the kingdom was divided into three portions; the powers formerly possessed by the chief justiciary were transferred to the bishops of Winchester, Norwich, and Ely; and one of them, with four assessors, was appointed to hold pleas in each of the three districts.”

But the bishops did not long exercise their judicial functions, which pope Alexander III. rightly considered

as incompatible with the duties of spiritual shepherds. Being compelled to resign their office, that of chief justiciary was restored in favour of Glanville ; and itinerant judges were re-appointed to the districts over which the bishops had presided. Another court, and one regarded with peculiar detestation, was that which took cognisance of all offences against the preservation of game, all trespasses in the royal forests. The enthusiastic attachment of the Norman kings to the exercise of the chase is well known. "William I." says the Saxon chronicle, "loved the great game as if he had begotten them : " and the same affection seems to have descended to his successors. Hence it was that the Conqueror wasted such an extensive tract of country as the New Forest in Hampshire. All the royal forests had their magistrates ; they were governed by a peculiar code of laws, of the most oppressive and odious character : even slight offences were punished by this summary tribunal with the loss of an eye, a hand, or some other member. Henry was certainly more clement than any of his predecessors, since, for a long time, he had accepted a fine in lieu of personal mutilation ; but he charged his itinerant judges to be unremitting in their efforts to discover the culprits, and to levy the fines. This clemency, however, was not of long continuance. He divided the forests into districts, placing over each, as judges, two clergymen, two knights, and two officers of his household, and commanding them not to accept, thenceforward, a pecuniary mulct from any person high or low, but rigorously to inflict the bodily mutilation.*

In the reign of the same king Henry, we often find the same forms of proceeding, the same modes of judicial testimony, as in that of his first Norman predecessors. Of these the ordeal by hot water and the

* Madox, *History of the Exchequer* (variis capitibus). *Leges Anglo-Normannicæ* (apud Wilkins, *passim*). Rodulfus de Diceto, p. 606. Hoveden, p. 337. Bracton, *De Legibus Angliæ*, lib. iii. t. 2, &c. Lingard, *History*, vol. ii. p. 135, &c.

duel were the chief: the former was certainly confined to the English, or to the humbler classes of Norman descent; while the latter was eagerly embraced by the more respectable of the dominant nation. The mode of proof, however, rested with the discretion of the judges: in some cases they awarded the ordeal; in some, when the guilt of the accused was not very presumptive, they could admit him to compurgation by oath; in others, again, when the quality of the parties and the presumption allowed, they decided on the duel: but with this exception,—that, in case of homicide, the accuser should either be of the kindred with the slain, or feudally connected with him. When the accusation was made, and wager of battle claimed, the defendant threw down his glove, and offered to prove his innocence with his body: if it were taken up by the plaintiff, the judges fixed a day for the battle; but both were previously required to make oath—the one, that he was innocent, the other, that the charge was true. But, if the accused were advanced in years, if he were maimed or wounded in the head, he might, if he were a freeman, demand the ordeal by hot iron; if a villein, that by boiling water. When the day arrived, both were led out to battle, each with head, arms, and legs bare; protected by a leather shield, and armed, not with a sword or lance, but with a stout wooden staff, an ell long, and turned at the end: the weapon was a formidable one, and generally one of the parties was either killed or forced to yield. If the defendant protracted the combat until dark, he was acquitted; if he yielded, he was executed, or maimed, or mulcted, according to the magnitude of the offence with which he was charged. If he vanquished, or wearied out his opponent, he was not only acquitted, but the accuser was fined sixty shillings, and deprived of the privileges of freedom. In the court of chivalry, however, where the parties were of baronial or knightly rank, neither staves nor leathern shields were employed: each was provided with lance sword, and dagger, and with whatever defensive armour

he chose. On these occasions much ceremony was observed : the judges were more august, the spectators more numerous, the preparations more splendid, and the king presided. A level plot of ground, sixty paces in length, by forty in breadth, was enclosed with posts seven feet high ; and the four sides of the parallelogram were occupied by the proper officers, who were armed to keep back the spectators. Two gates in this enclosure, one in the east, the other in the west, admitted the parties. Before advancing to the charge, each renewed his oath, that his former statement was true ; that he had no arms save those appointed by the court ; that he had not resorted to magical charms ; that his trust was, first, in God, next, in the goodness of his cause, and his own bravery. The accuser then holding the book of the gospels in his right hand, and the right hand of the accused in his left, swore that he would do his utmost either to kill his adversary, or force him to confess : the accused changing hands, and taking the book, in his turn, swore that he would do his utmost to prevent him. Each was then led back to the gate at which he had entered, the challenger to the east, the accused to the west ; the constable, who occupied the steps of the throne, then exclaimed three times, in a loud voice, " Let them go ! " the third time adding, " and do their duty ! " They then advanced furiously against each other : if either was killed, he was stripped of his armour where he lay, and his body, tied to the tail of a horse, was dragged dishonourably out of the lists. If either cried craven, he was in like manner stripped and dragged away ; but it was to be hanged or beheaded, in presence of the marshal. The wager by battle was anciently used in civil no less than in criminal cases : as where the tenant denied the service claimed by his land ; where the seller denied that he had guaranteed his wares to the buyer ; where the debtor denied the claim against him. In these cases, however, as baronial or royal interests were not involved, there was much less ceremony. The defendant was

not compelled to fight in person, and the plaintiff was always expected to substitute a champion. Even this modification of a barbarous custom was displeasing to Henry, who has the glory of having substituted trial by grand assize for the wager of battle. To arrest the process by duel, the defendant had only to apply for a written prohibition: in consequence, the plaintiff, if he meant to prosecute the suit, was obliged to apply for a writ to proceed by assize. A jury was empannelled by the sheriff, the members of which were sworn to judge of the matter in dispute if possible from personal knowledge, if not, from the testimony of two men.*

In the reign of John, considerable improvements were introduced, both as regarded the liberties of every class of the people, and the administration of justice. 1. Wearied by the vexatious feudal exactions of the crown, its vassals were the first to express their discontent: their example was followed by those of other superiors; but as neither, nor both united, were sufficiently powerful to insist on a redress of their grievances, they perceived the policy of uniting with other classes of society who had grievances as heavy to deplore. Among their coadjutors none were so influential as the ecclesiastics, who during several reigns had seen not only their immunities, but their dearest rights, trampled under foot. The freemen in each county, the inhabitants of each city or incorporated town, had no less reason to be dissatisfied. Union gave them all the strength they could have desired: it forced the tyrant to sign a charter, the provisions of which had been drawn up by these patriots. They are too numerous to be detailed here; but we may advert for a moment to their general character. Having guaranteed the preservation of their church "whole and inviolate," the charter proceeds to redress the grievances experienced by the tenants of the crown. The relief was perma-

* Spelman, *Archæologia*, p. 100—103 Bracton, *De Legibus Angliæ*, iii. 18 Lingard's *History*, ii. 141.

nently fixed from the earl to the knight: wardship was subject to regulations which preserved the value of the estate; no heiress could henceforth be married unequally, nor without the knowledge of her kindred; widows were secured in the possession of their *maritagium**, dowry, and inheritance; nor were they thenceforward to be compulsorily married, but suffered to remain, if they chose, in their widowed state; aids were confined to the three legal occasions; and purveyance was shorn of its abuses. From the securities granted to the barons and knights the immediate tenants of the crown, the charter passes to those of the citizens and burgesses. To them and to the inhabitants of all towns and sea-ports were guaranteed their ancient privileges, freedom of trade with foreign nations, liberty to leave the country whenever they pleased, unless in time of war, and uniformity of weights and measures. To sub-vassals were confirmed the same rights as the king granted to his chief tenants. 2. In favour of all, it was decreed that justice should not be denied, that it should not be sold, that it should not be delayed to the meanest freeman. This was a most important article; not less so was the one which enacted that "no freeman should be arrested, or disseised of his land, or outlawed, or destroyed in any manner; nor should the king go upon him, or send upon him, but by the lawful judgment of his peers, and by the law of the land." This solemn guarantee of individual liberty and property, from the highest to the lowest state of *freedom*,—for the *servile* class, still a numerous one, was not judged worthy of legislation—would alone entitle the barons and prelates of Runnymede to the veneration of posterity. It did not stop here: it proceeded to circumscribe the extent of pecuniary americiament in the judicial courts. No freeman was to

* "*Maritagium*, donatio quæ à parente filiæ fit propter nuptias, seu intuitu matrimonii."—*Ducange*, ad voc. "In alia acceptatione accipitur dos secundum leges Romanas, secundum quas propria appellatur dos id quod cum muliere datur viro, quod vulgariter dicitur *maritagium*."—*Glossule*, l. vii. c. 1.

fined heavily for minor, nor unreasonably for more considerable offences ; that the fines should not rest at the discretion of the judge, but should be imposed by oath of a jury or " the good men of the neighbourhood ;" and that, in taxing the offender's substance, if a freeholder, his land, if a merchant, his wares, if a husbandman, his implements, if an artisan, his tools, should be sacred from the touch of justice. The migratory disposition of our ancient kings, whose courts were seldom long together in the same place, was fatal to the prompt administration of justice. The citations might be issued from Westminster, the pleadings might open at Canterbury or Winchester, judgment might be given at York : wherever the court removed, the witnesses were compelled to follow. To remedy this disadvantage, a bench of justices had been established at Westminster to hear civil disputes. The institution was confirmed by the charter, which decreed that common or civil pleas should no longer follow the person of the king, but be holden in some certain place. This clause severed the civil from the criminal jurisdiction, which was still attached to the king's migratory court : equally migratory too continued the bench of exchequer, which took cognizance of all matters regarding the royal revenues. These regulations did not supersede the itinerant administration of justice : judges were still sent on the circuit, but apparently at no periodical times. Even if their visitations were annual, they were insufficient for the wants of the people ; and it was enacted that four times every year two of these legal dignitaries should enter every county, should be joined by four knights chosen in the county court, and that the six, thus formed into a royal commission, should take cognizance of certain civil disputes, inferior, however, in importance to those which fell within the province of the assize judges, or of the new court of common pleas. This court soon became one chiefly of appeal ; for though it could remove causes from the inferior tribunals, and though it took cognizance of

all, even in the first instance, when the parties commenced proceedings in it, yet we cannot doubt that its time would be chiefly occupied in considering such of the more important cases as had been removed from these tribunals.*

Such, in substance, was the Great Charter, the provisions of which succeeding monarchs sought perpetually to evade or violate. But the nation was no less watchful to procure its confirmation, and to enforce its clauses. Four times it was confirmed with some changes by Henry III., twice by Edward I., fifteen times by Edward III., and seven times by Richard II. This remarkable fact proves the hostility of the crown, and the attachment of the people, to this groundwork of English freedom. That the feeble Henry should have been forced to sanction it, will not surprise us; but that monarchs so powerful as the Edwards should have bowed to the same necessity, is honourable alike to it and its advocates. In their contentions, mankind unfortunately pass from one extreme to another quite as blamable. The oppressed demand liberty; and, when that liberty is secured, if the circumstances of the times favour them, they will inevitably clamour for power; nor do they consider whether it can be granted them without damage to the commonweal. Emancipate the slave; and, in the nature of things, he will soon aspire to higher objects, — to distinctions and privileges which can be possessed by the few only. From John the barons had wrung many important concessions, which ought, in justice, to have satisfied them. There was, indeed, reason to apprehend that Henry would evade them; and, to guard against this probable result, certain measures were justifiable, and even necessary; but that the king's ministers should be appointed by the great council of the nation, was a demand inconsistent with the due power of the crown. The still more insulting one of the barons (1258), that the government should be confided to a commission of twenty-four spiritual and temporal

* Magna Charta, cap. 1—60. *passim*.

peers, — in other words, the utter annihilation of the royal authority, — sufficiently exhibit the unprincipled ambition of the earl of Leicester. This commission, indeed, was to be but temporary, until it had reformed some prominent abuses; but, from the sequel, we are fortified in believing that it was certainly intended to be permanent, if not by the great body of the conspirators, doubtless by their leaders. At length the bulk of the people, pitying their ill-treated sovereign, and finding that the transfer of the royal authority from the hands of one tyrant to those of many had greatly aggravated their evils, rose in his behalf, and enabled him to resume the plenitude of his functions. But in human revolutions good is as often deduced from evil, as evil from good. These efforts of Leicester and his associates to obtain the supreme power, led, in the opinion of most critics, to the creation of parliament as now constituted. As, however, this subject has been fiercely disputed, we shall open it in the moderate language of the ablest of our English historians*: —

“ During the reign of Henry, but while he was under the control of Leicester, we are surprised at the unexpected appearance of a parliament, constituted, as our present parliaments are, of the lords spiritual and temporal, and the representatives of the counties, cities, and boroughs. Was this the innovation of a bold and politic adventurer, or merely the repetition of an ancient and accustomed form? Something more than a century ago, the question was fiercely debated between the adverse champions of the prerogative of the crown and the liberties of the people: since that period, it has been investigated with more coolness and impartiality; and most writers have agreed to pronounce the assembly of 1265 a new experiment, devised for the purpose of extending the influence, and procuring support to the projects, of Leicester. 1. In the history of the preceding reigns, we shall search in vain for any satisfactory evidence that the cities and burghs sent their representatives to the national councils. Historians, indeed, sometimes mention the people, or the multitude, as awaiting the decision of the assembly, and testifying their approbation by their applause, but such passages may, with propriety, be understood of the neighbouring in-

* Lingard, *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 365, &c. 4to. edit.

habitants whom curiosity might lead to the spot ; of the culprits and petitioners, the suitors and pledges, whose duty or whose interest it was to be present ; and of the clergymen and monks, the knights and esquires who were in attendance on their lords, the prelates and barons. If, at a later period, some boroughs claimed the privilege of representation from remote antiquity, or if the members of the lower house boasted that they had formed a constituent part of the legislature from time beyond the memory of man ; such pretensions may be attributed either to their ignorance of history, or to the use of legal expressions without any definite meaning. To some, all the great councils under the first Norman kings appear to have been constituted on feudal principles. The sovereign might claim an extraordinary aid from his liegeman ; but the consent of the man was requisite to legalise the aid : he might seek to make alterations in the laws and customs of the realm ; but he was previously expected to ask the advice of these vassals whose rights and interests it was his duty, as their lord, to protect and improve. Hence all who held in barony were summoned to the great council ; but, as the reader has seen, a line of distinction was soon drawn between the greater barons, the lords spiritual and temporal, and the lesser barons, the inferior tenants-in-chief. From their great property, the former (and, through them, their numerous tenantry) were deeply interested in almost every legislative enactment ; and so extensive was their influence, that the royal authority could not, without their concurrence, carry any law into execution. Hence their presence in the national councils was exacted as a duty ; and every unjustifiable failure on their part was punishable as a breach of that fealty which they owed to the crown. But with the inferior tenants the case was different. Their consent was implied in that of the greater barons ; and, as attendance must have proved expensive and inconvenient to men of small fortunes, it was but seldom enforced. Hence, on ordinary occasions, the great council appears to have been composed of the bishops and abbots, the earls and barons, the ministers and judges, and the neighbouring knights holding of the crown : but, on others, when the safety of the kingdom was at stake, or an extraordinary aid was to be granted, the king convoked an assembly of all his tenants in chief ; in more early times, perhaps, by a summons directed to each individual separately, afterwards by personal writs to the greater barons, and a general writ to the other tenants in each county. 2. But though the immediate vassals of the crown were the only individuals possessing a personal right to be present in parliament, there are some instances in which the representatives of the counties were required

to attend, previously to the year 1265. It must at all times have been difficult for the sovereign to become acquainted with the real state of the country, from the interested reports either of his barons or of his ministers. If then he wished to ascertain his own rights, or the wrongs of the people, or the peculations of his officers, he was accustomed to authorise a commission of knights in each shire, either named by himself or elected in the county court, to proceed from hundred to hundred, to make enquiries upon oath, and to lay the result of their labours before him, either in council or parliament. Thus we are told, that William the Conqueror, when he resolved to ratify the statutes of his Anglo-Saxon predecessors, ordered twelve 'noble and sage men' to be chosen in each county, who should meet in his presence, and determine by common consent what were the real laws of the kingdom. In the Magna Charta, twelve knights were to be elected in the next court of each county, to enquire into 'the evil customs of sheriffs of forests, and foresters, of warrens and warreners, and of the wardens of banks and their officers.' Henry III., in his seventh year (1223), ordered every sheriff to enquire, by means of twelve lawful and discreet knights, what were the rights and liberties of the crown in his shire, on the day on which the war began between John and the barons; and, in his forty-second year (1258), he appointed four knights in each county to enquire into all 'the excesses, transgressions, and injuries committed by judges, sheriffs, bailiffs, and all other persons, and to make their report to him in council on a certain day. The same may be observed with respect to the collection of taxes. In the most ancient instance on record, in the year 1206, the subsidy was collected under the inspection of the itinerant judges; but the method was accompanied with inconvenience and delay; and, in 1220, we find writs to the sheriff, appointing him the collector, in conjunction with two knights to be chosen in a full court of the county with the consent of all the suitors." . . . "They collected the taxes; and made to the king the report of their grievances. When they had advanced thus far, it required but an additional step to introduce them into the great council as the representatives of their electors, vested with the power of granting money, and of petitioning for redress; almost the only functions which for a long period after its establishment the house of commons ventured to exercise. In confirmation of this theory, it may be observed, that the knights of the shire, when they became regular members of parliament, received the same remuneration which had been assigned to them on former occasions. Anciently, as soon as they had made their report to the king, afterwards, at the conclusion of the session, they obtained writs

directing the sheriffs to defray, by a rate to be levied on the county, their expenses for so many days, 'in going, staying, and returning.' The peers attended in their own right, and of course paid their own costs; but the knights were only the deputies of others, and therefore required compensation from those whose business they undertook to transact. The most ancient writ, summoning the representatives of the counties to parliament, is dated in the fifteenth year of John, 1213. It may be divided into three parts. In the first, the knights who had already been warned were ordered to meet the king in arms at Oxford, on a certain day. This was a summons to perform military service. The second part alluded to some occurrence not mentioned by historians, and directed the sheriffs to bring up the bodies of the barons without arms — probably prisoners in his custody — for trial. In the third, it is ordered that four discreet knights of the county should be sent to Oxford, to treat with the king concerning the affairs of the kingdom. There can be little doubt that this last was a summons to parliament, as it is conceived in the same words as such writs of a later date. On the face of the writ, indeed, it does not appear whether the knights were to be chosen by the county, or appointed by the sheriff. But this ambiguity is done away in that which follows. In 1254, Henry III. was in Gascony; and, by his directions, queen Eleanor and the earl of Cornwall, the regents, summoned all persons holding land of the crown in chief, to the amount of twenty pounds per annum, to assemble at Portsmouth on an appointed day, and sail to the assistance of the king; and then ordered that, 'besides these, two lawful and discreet knights should be chosen by the men of every county, in the place of all and each of them, to assemble at Westminster, and to determine, with the knights of the other counties, what aid they would grant to their sovereign in his present necessity, so that the same knights might be able to answer in the matter of the said aid for their respective counties.' This writ embraces two objects. From the greater vassals of the crown it requires military service; from the other inhabitants of each county it demands pecuniary aid, and for that purpose prescribes the election of representatives, whose determination should be binding on their constituents. Whether the barons were summoned to assemble at the same place with the knights of the shires is uncertain, but immaterial; for in that age the different orders voted their money separately, and without the interference of each other. The next instance occurred seven years later. Leicester had summoned a parliament at St. Albans, 'to which each county was ordered to send three knights, that they might treat of the common

concerns of the kingdom.' But in the interval a temporary reconciliation took place between him and Henry, and it was agreed that the king should hold the parliament on the same day at Windsor, and should issue new writs, ordering the attendance of the same knights. They were called 'to treat on the same subjects, and to convince themselves that the king intended nothing which was not for the honour and common advantage of the realm.' 3. But if we occasionally discover the knights of the shire among the members of the great councils, we have no sufficient reason to believe that they were accompanied by the deputies of the cities and boroughs. Among the writs which were issued during the reign of John and his son, and of which many have been preserved, there exists no vestige of a summons, directing the return of citizens and burgesses, more ancient than the administration of Leicester. We may safely pronounce it an innovation; but an innovation which the course of events must otherwise have introduced within a few years. During the lapse of two centuries, the cities and boroughs had silently grown out of their original insignificance, and had begun to command attention from their constant increase in wealth and population. Taking advantage of the poverty of their lords, the inhabitants had successively purchased for themselves the most valuable privileges. In lieu of individual services, they now paid a common rent; their guilds were incorporated by charter: they had acquired the rights of holding fairs, of demanding tolls, of choosing their magistrates, and of enacting their own laws. They were able to supply both men and money; and it became the obvious policy of the crown to attach them to its interests by lightening their burdens, and attending to their petitions. Formerly, whenever the king obtained an aid from his tenants in chief, he imposed a tallage on his boroughs, which was levied at discretion by a capitation tax on personal property. Though the inhabitants did not dispute this right of the crown, they bore with impatience the grievances which, on such occasions, they experienced from the despotism of the royal officers; and frequently offered in place of the tallage a considerable sum, under the name of a gift, which, if it were accepted, was assessed and paid by their own magistrates. This was in reality to indulge them with the liberty of taxing themselves; and when the innovation had been once introduced, it was obviously more convenient in itself, and more consistent with the national customs, that the new privilege should be exercised by deputies assembled together, instead of being intrusted to the discordant judgment of so many separate communities. This did not escape the discernment of Leicester;

and if the improvement was abandoned after his fall (probably on account of the disgrace attached to his memory), its utility was appreciated by the succeeding monarch, who, before the close of his reign, regularly called to parliament the representatives of the cities and boroughs, as well as those of the counties."

With the preceding view of the subject we perfectly coincide: it is, in fact, the only judicious one that can be taken. Yet there have not been wanting writers, and those of some note, who contend that the privilege of borough representation is as old as the Saxon times, — that our modern parliament is a lineal descendant of the *witena-gemet*. Omitting those who, a century ago, so fiercely debated the subject, let us hear a living writer, who has done more to throw light on the Saxon times than any preceding historian*: —

"The popular part of our representation seems to have been immemorial. There is no document that marks its commencement. And, if the probabilities of the case had been duly considered, it would have been allowed to be unlikely that the sovereigns and the aristocracy of the nation would have united to diminish their own legislative power, by calling representatives from the people to share it. Neither kings nor nobles could alone confer this power; and it would have been a voluntary and unparalleled abandonment of their own exclusive prerogative and privileges, that they should have combined to impart it to others, if these had not possessed an ancient and indefeasible right of enjoying it." . . . "If the freeholders of the Anglo-Saxon countries were not represented in their *witena-gemet*, at what other time did this most important privilege originate? That it should have begun after the Norman conquest is incredible. If the legislative council of the nation had been from immemorial custom confined to the king and nobles, their sturdy maintenance of all their exclusive rights and advantages, is evidence that they would not willingly have curtailed their power by so great an innovation. The pride of nobility would not have admitted un noble freeholders to have shared in the most honourable of its privileges; and, least of all, would the fierce and powerful Norman lords have placed the Anglo-Saxon freemen, whom they had conquered, and with whom they were long in jealous enmity and proud hatred, in the possession of such a right. But the total

* Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 185, &c.

absence of any document or date of the origin of the election of representatives by the freeholders of counties, is the strongest proof we can have that the custom has been immemorial, and long preceded the Norman conquest." . . . "To the citizens and burgesses of parliament, analogous remarks are equally applicable. We may find no existing writ ordering their election earlier than the 23d year of Edward I.*; but the loss of the preceding records is no proof of their non-existence, and ought never to have been confounded with it."

It would be impossible to find, in any other author of note, so feeble a defence of the antiquity contested, or so total a misconception of our political constitution. In the first place, the whole argument proceeds on the gratuitous assumption that its towns sent their deputies to the *witena-gemot*. This error we have sufficiently exploded in the earlier part of this chapter.† In the second, even if the Saxon great councils had been thus constituted, the historian would have been required to show that the same political features had been preserved by the Norman kings. We know that the Norman constitution was essentially feudal; that it exacted personal military service, and attendance at the councils of the sovereign; that of representation it never dreamed; and that Norman pride would not, at the conquest, have permitted the third estate to exist, still less to have a deliberative voice in the council. In fact, with such a constitution, representation was utterly irreconcilable. In the third place, when deputies from the cities, boroughs, &c. were first summoned to the parliament of the third Henry, that summons was justly regarded rather as a burden than as an honour. All that they were expected or that they would have been permitted to do, was, to say what sum of money they could vote for the necessities of the state. The exercise of so humble a duty was not likely to alarm the feudal members, who had rather cause to rejoice that a considerable portion of the money required would be furnished by the

* Representatives of boroughs were certainly summoned in the preceding reign of Henry III., though the writs are not extant.

† See pages 45, 46. of the present volume.

burghers. And so far were the deputies themselves from esteeming their new privilege as an advantage, that they long eagerly sought to escape it. Numerous were the petitions presented in succeeding parliaments, to the effect that certain boroughs and towns might not be constrained to incur so heavy an expense as that of equipping and maintaining deputies to parliament. This fact is a convincing proof that the honour was dearly bought, that the deputies possessed no power beyond that of taxing themselves. Nor is it less generally known that, if they dared to open their lips on any other subject, they were immediately answered by the frowns of the barons and prelates, and even of the crown; being reminded that their province was purely to grant supplies. Down even to a recent period, — as lately, certainly, as the reign of Henry VIII. — they were generally restricted to the same limited sphere, while the great business of the nation was transacted by the other orders of the state. The advantage which the monarch found in summoning a body of men who had money at their immediate disposal, and the alleviation which their supplies would confer on the higher orders of the state, who had land, indeed, but no money, will sufficiently account for the facility with which the innovation was received throughout the country.*

Before we dismiss the eventful reign of Henry III., we may add two or three other innovations. 1. The secular clergy through their bishops and archdeacons, and the monastic bodies through their abbots and priors, were also summoned to parliament. The ecclesiastical members, however, were much more attached to their own convocations, where their deliberations were more independent; and by degrees they obtained the confirmation of the privilege: all that the crown wanted was money, and, provided this were obtained, the mode of granting it was immaterial. 2. The abolition of the

* Brady, *Treatise of Boroughs*, ii. Appendix, 145. 150. 197. 203. 212, &c. Hody, *History of Convocations*, p. 313, &c. Carte, *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 250, &c. Lingard and Turner, *ubi supra*.

ordeals by hot water, hot iron, and the duel, was the work of the church, which had always condemned this rash appeal to the judgment of the Almighty. 3. The anarchy produced by the absence of Richard I., by the struggles of the barons with John and Henry, loudly called for a remedy : this was sought in the introduction or improvement of a stricter system of police. All men possessed of property from forty shillings to fifteen pounds per annum, between the ages of fifteen and sixty, were enrolled, sworn to provide themselves with arms, and to join the hue and cry wherever it should be raised in pursuit of offenders: and they were subject to their ancient officers, — the inhabitants of burghs to their mayors and bailiffs, of hundreds to their local constables. From the feast of the Ascension to that of St. Michael, there was a nocturnal watch from sunset to sunrise; in the villages it consisted of four or six stout men, armed with bows, arrows, and staves; in the towns, of twelve; in the cities of six at every gate. After the watch was set, no one could enter or leave the place; and, if any attempted, he was seized, confined until morning, and examined before the local authority.*

We have already alluded to the hostile feeling with which the successors of John regarded Magna Charta, and their endeavours to elude it. Embarrassed by the expenses of his wars, Edward I. continued to extort money in virtue of his prerogative, without regard to the newly-conferred rights of his people, and indifferent to the spirit of freedom which, during the two last reigns, had spread widely over the country. Having seized, in virtue of his own arbitrary will, all the money to be found in the churches and monasteries, and retained it under the deceptive plea of a loan; having exacted from the citizens of London a sixth part of their profits; from the knights of the shires one tenth, he demanded of the clergy half of their revenues for one year: this they reluctantly granted; but their compliance did not avert other demands equally unreasonable; and

* Matthæus Parisiensis, p. 1145.

when they refused, they were formally outlawed, their agricultural substance seized and confiscated, unless they chose to redeem it by a certain day. The exaction of a seventh from the deputies of the cities and boroughs, the tallages to which he arbitrarily subjected them, the vexatious restrictions which he placed on commerce, put the finishing hand to the national discontent. To resist these exactions, the earls of Hereford and Norfolk, and the archbishop of Canterbury, formed a powerful combination, and placed themselves at its head. Taking advantage of the king's departure into Flanders (1297), in the name of the baronage of England they commanded the judges and officers of the exchequer to refrain from levying the obnoxious rates; and at the Guildhall they invited the citizens to join them in forcing the king to confirm their Great Charter. At first Edward resolved to resist, and he despatched orders to that effect to his barons of the exchequer; but he was soon rendered more tractable by a succession of unexpected disasters; and his council of regency, which could better appreciate the danger of his position, did not hesitate, in an interview with the heads of the discontented, not only to confirm the charter, but to sanction some new articles which still more closely restrained the obnoxious prerogatives of the crown. That no tallage or aid should thenceforth be levied without the consent of parliament; that no royal officer should seize the smallest portion of any man's substance; that the arbitrary tax on wool should be repealed; that the ancient privileges of any class of men should be solemnly confirmed; that the heads of the present organised resistance should be fully pardoned; and that twice a year not only should the charter, with the explanatory articles, be read in the cathedral churches, but that every man, however high in dignity, should be excommunicated who presumed to violate it, were the chief additions approved by the council of regency, headed by prince Edward. All that was now required was the confirmation by the king;

and, to procure it the more easily, the different orders offered as its condition a considerable subsidy. It was sent to Edward, who, after a struggle, subscribed the instruments. In the sequel, he endeavoured, like his father and grandfather, to evade them ; but the indignant parliament forced him not only to repeat the confirmation, but to sanction new articles still, which chiefly regarded the execution of the charter, and the amelioration of the forest laws. “ Thus, after a long struggle, was won, from an able and powerful monarch, the most valuable of the privileges enjoyed by the commons of England at the present day. If we are indebted to the patriotism of cardinal Langton, and the barons at Runnymede, the framers of the great charter, we ought equally to revere the memory of archbishop Winchelsey, and the earls of Hereford and Norfolk. The former erected barriers against the abuse of the sovereign authority ; the latter fixed the liberties of the subject on a sure and permanent foundation.” * Thus disappointed in his projects of rapacity as respected his Christian subjects, the king turned to the Jews, a people against whom he had always borne unusual antipathy, and whom, from the vulgar hatred towards them, he could treat as he pleased. Their dishonourable mode of subsistence, their usury, their over-reaching spirit, their contempt of common honesty, their sordid habits, — qualities which seem inseparable from them, — had greatly added to the hatred engendered by religious prejudice. But what, in the estimation of Edward, was much more criminal, they were charged, apparently on the best grounds, with clipping the current coin of the realm. Yet this is surely no excuse for the barbarity with which he treated them. He first hanged 280 individuals accused of this crime in London alone ; the rest, amounting to beyond 16,000, were seized on the same day, and committed to prison ; nor were they released until they had paid 12,000*l*. Even this failed to satisfy the tyrant, who, in three

* Lingard, ii. 470.

years more, entirely banished the hateful race from the kingdom.*

Yet, with all his defects, Edward has claims on the gratitude of England: from the improvements which he introduced both into the administration of justice and the laws, he has been called the English Justinian. He defined the limits of jurisdiction in the three great courts,—King's Bench, Exchequer, and Common Pleas; and, by circumscribing the competency of the courts ecclesiastical to the causes regarding marriage, wills, tithes, perjury, defamation, mortuaries, and public penance, he no less clearly marked the boundary between the temporal and spiritual tribunals. He retained the itinerant system of justice; and, in addition, provided that two of the judges should thrice in the year be joined in commission with one or more knights in every shire, for the holding of the assizes. By the celebrated statute of Winchester, he confirmed the watch and ward, improved the hue and cry, restored the ancient custom of sureties from strangers and lodgers, and, in addition, enacted that those retreats of robbers, the woods skirting the highways, should be cut down. Finding that some of his regulations were but inadequately observed, through the apathy or the overwhelming duties of his functionaries, he called into existence a new local authority,—that of justices of the peace. Originally, this excellent innovation extended no farther than a commission addressed to certain knights in every shire, whom it empowered and commanded to enforce the provisions of the Winchester statute, by invoking, whenever necessary, the armed force of the sheriff; but their utility was soon so evident, that their powers were considerably extended; and, from mere conservators of the peace, they became local judges and interpreters of the law.—Of the improvements which the king introduced into the laws, the most prominent were those which regarded the rights of property. To preserve the claims of the

* Authorities:—Brady, Hody, Hoveden, Matthew of Westminster, Walsingham, Lingard, and others.

feudal superiors, and to prevent the feoffee from alienating the land, he confined the heritability to the heirs male: in other words, he shortly curtailed it; providing, in the event of their extinction, for its return to the family of the donor; and he aimed a blow at the multiplication of manorial courts. When a man possessed freehold land of inheritance, he generally granted a portion of it, under the obligation of military service to him alone, to two or more tenants, and thereby obtained a feudal jurisdiction, — a manor, with the suits, rights, profits, and appurtenances inseparable from the dignity. The barons and tenants in capite could not behold with much complacency this prevailing system of subinfeudation, by which their influence over the fiefs thus divided was so much diminished. They beheld a new order of men, who, though located on their domains, owed them neither suit nor homage; and refused to recognise their claims to reliefs, escheats, aids, wardships, and the other interminable incidents of the feudal system. The creation of new manors was positively prohibited; nor, in modern law, are any admitted to be legal which cannot trace their existence beyond the year 1290. The acquisition of lands by ecclesiastical bodies was another of the evils which strongly attracted his attention. As such lands passed into mortmain, as the possessors never die, the superior lord was deprived of the relief, escheats, service, suit, wardship, and his other rights of feudality. Rigorous as was the monarch's prohibition against such alienations in mortmain (1279), the church found means to evade it.*

The character of the laws promulgated by the Norman and Plantagenet princes does not materially differ from that of the collection ascribed to the Confessor. We have before observed, that the Conqueror attempted no innovations in the national code, but professed his resolution to govern by it. Additions, indeed, he made

* Statuta Edwardi Regis, 7. 13. 18. (varii capitulis.) Lingard, History, li. 473.

to it, as were required by the interests of feudality ; and his example was imitated by his son, Henry I. Whoever will be at the pains to peruse the *Leges Gulielmi Conquistoris*, in the collection of Wilkins, will be satisfied that he has done little more than translate into Norman French the statutes passed under the preceding Saxon kings. To restrain the savage propensity of his new subjects, he raised the pecuniary mulcts, — the usual penalties for wounds and other offences. Thus, for the loss of the hand or foot, he exacted one half of the sufferer's were ; for the thumb or big toe, one fourth ; while, under the former system, a very few shillings sufficed to satisfy justice. The additional articles fix the amount of the relief from the different tenants, and provide for the settlement of disputes where the parties are of different nations. The laws of Henry I. exhibit a greater advance in the system of feudality, since they regard the judicial power as inseparable from the possession of a fief, and indicate what class of offences are cognisable by the courts of the manor, the vavasor, the viscount, earl, &c. They do not, however, destroy the ancient courts of the country, nor the Saxon laws ; on the contrary, the monarch commences by confirming the authority of those ascribed to the Confessor. It is gratifying to perceive a constantly increasing tendency to estimate a crime, not by the rank of the person, but by the nature of the offence. But the system of pecuniary compensation was too closely interwoven into all the barbaric codes, to be easily destroyed : it is not until a very recent period that blood was demanded for blood, without distinction of persons. The laws of Henry II., Henry III., and Edward I., regard, not so much crimes and their penalties, as the functions, conduct, and character of the judges : they are rather administrative than moral. On their general character we have already dwelt as largely as our limits will allow.*

* *Leges Gulielmi Conquistoris*, *Henrici I.*, *Henrici II.*, *Ricardi I.*, *Johannis* (apud Wilkins). *Leges Edwardi I.* (*variis capitulis*.)

Passing over the reign of Edward II., as a period of civil commotion, when violence, not law, was triumphant, that of Edward III. is chiefly interesting from the increasing confidence of parliament. By the industry of Mr. Hallam, it has been proved that in this reign three essential principles of our constitution were announced, we cannot say established ; — that no money could legally be raised without the consent of those who were to pay it ; that both houses of parliament should concur with the king before any measure could have the effect of law ; that the commons should have the right of enquiring into public abuses, and of impeaching public men. Yet though these points were recognised often in theory, and sometimes in practice, let us not be misled by sounds, or by abstract notions of right. In cases of urgency, the king never failed to raise money by virtue of his own prerogative ; though, when remonstrances were made, he promised, in consideration of a subsidy, to avoid its exercise in future. Laws were generally made, at the request of the commons, by the authority of the king, with the consent of the peers, — a formula of frequent recurrence, and one which appears to have been founded on a tacit rather than an express understanding to that effect. This fact proves, that, in the reign of the third Edward, the commons were not entirely convoked for the voting of supplies. But even the term commons is apt to confuse us, unless we draw a line of distinction between the classes of which it was composed. The deputies of the boroughs appear to have possessed originally no other privilege, while the knights of the shires, who were of higher respectability, had, from the very first, the more valuable one of reporting to the crown the condition of their respective counties, and of soliciting such enactments as might most effectually meet existing wants. That they were instructed to expose the necessities of their constituents is unquestionable from the rolls of parliament. It is certain that their example had a salutary effect on the borough

deputies, who, by degrees, obtained confidence enough to request the attention of government towards their own constituents. Often the demands of both would be kindred in principle ; and their unanimity must have had a much greater effect on the legislature. The third privilege, that of enquiring into public abuses, was still more indefinite. No attempt was made to exercise it before the fifteenth year of Edward, when the unpopularity of his government, the ascendancy of the duke of Lancaster, the criminal acts of his favourite, Alice Ferrers, emboldened men to speak their minds with much less reserve. In the session of 1376 the commons, indeed, not only ventured to condemn the corrupt conduct of " certain persons near the king," but actually impeached two lords and four merchants ; yet we may reasonably doubt whether they would have proceeded to such an extremity, were it not for the encouragement and even positive support of the Black Prince, whom jealousy to the duke of Lancaster urged to oppose the government. This opinion is confirmed by the fact, that, on the death of the prince, the commons relapsed into their former state of humility, and even abandoned their leaders to the vengeance of the court.*

But the reign of the third Edward must not be thus summarily dismissed. It is remarkable for some striking peculiarities, and for some no less striking improvements, in the organisation of the state and in the condition of the people. 1 *Purveyance* was an abuse to which Edward adhered as tenaciously as his predecessors ; nor could the remonstrances of the commons have induced him to abandon it, had not the vote of supplies been made a necessary condition of its mitigation. By this oppressive feudal prestation not only were the nobles, knights, and domestics of the royal household, in its perpetual migrations, furnished with horses, carriages, food, forage, &c., but the same ne-

* Authorities : — The history of king Edward's reign.

cessaries were seized for the royal garrisons, and even for the armies in foreign parts. After many struggles, Edward agreed that the right of *gratuitous* supply should be limited to the king, the queen, and the heir to the throne, and that even they should find their own horses and carriages ; that for whatever was required by their suite, the price, if small, should be paid in twenty-four hours, if large, in four months ; and that the amount demanded, if disputed, should be fixed by a jury in the neighbourhood. We may, however, observe, that the right was often abused by succeeding monarchs, until it was totally abolished by Charles II. — 2. The administration of justice exhibits considerable improvement. Sheriffs, coroners, and escheators, the tyrants of their respective districts, were, in the first place, no longer to be chosen from any other class than the landed gentry ; and, in the second, they were not to continue in office during a term of years, but were to be annually removed. Hence, at the expiration of the twelve months, if any functionary had abused his powers, he could be sued on equal terms in the court of his successor. To the justices of the peace, — an institution, as we have before related *, of the first Edward, — much ampler powers were conceded ; and they were authorised to hold their sessions four times in the year. To remove the temptations to bribery, the salaries of the judges were raised ; and, a far more salutary innovation, all judicial proceedings were ordered to be conducted, not, as heretofore, in the French, but in the English language. A good, scarcely less great, was the limitation of constructive treason. During several reigns, the definition of treason lay with the judge, who, by a little subtilty, could transform almost any felony or trespass into the most penal of crimes, which placed the convicted offender, his person and substance, at the mercy of the crown. Owing to the

* See before, page 128.

earnest and repeated remonstrances of the commons, it was at length agreed that treason should be confined to seven determinate offences. — 3. Whatever were the public grievances, — and the same may be said of many private ones, — they could only be redressed by parliament ; for though petitions could be presented to the royal council, they were not likely to have so much weight as when laid before the house of commons by some representative, and made the basis of an application to the crown, sometimes for a new general law, sometimes merely for individual redress. Hence that parliament should often be sitting, to receive and to support the claims of justice, was most desirable to the people. There was an understood regulation, — perhaps it may be called a constitutional law, — that parliament should be at least annually assembled. Like his predecessors, Edward would have convoked them just when he pleased, had not his necessities, — the offspring of his long and ruinous wars, — rendered it impossible for him long to dispense with new supplies ; and supplies he could not legally raise without their consent. Hence in his reign of fifty years more than seventy writs were issued for their meeting. — 4. But though our monarchs could not lawfully raise money of their own authority, they were not much disposed to regard the engagement which they had made to that effect. Nothing, they thought, was so humiliating as this compulsory application to their people, especially as it was not always successful, and, even when it was, as it was accompanied by demands not very agreeable to their notions of prerogative. To levy an aid, or impose a tallage, at their own pleasure, was so tempting, that we need not wonder at the frequency with which a great constitutional principle was violated. The tallage on movable property, varying from a thirtieth to a seventh, was the most ancient method of raising a supply by the crown. Originally each householder was allowed to swear to the value of the movables he possessed ; subse-

quently commissioners were appointed to enquire into the circumstances of each. Not unfrequently the neighbours of one were constrained, on oath, to deliver their opinion as to the quantity of his corn, cattle, merchandise, furniture, wearing apparel, and even money. The evasions of the one party, the inquisitorial powers of the other, led to much discontent, which was loudly expressed by the knights and burgesses in parliament. The commissioners often found it more convenient to compound with each township or district for a certain sum, in lieu of the tenth or fifteenth; and from 1334 Edward always agreed to receive the composition — an arrangement no less agreeable to the people. From the same reign this grant was regarded as the peculiar province of parliament, though subsequent kings did not scruple to impose it whenever they had the plea of necessity for the arbitrary measure. Not less arbitrary, and scarcely less productive, were the sums imposed by the crown, 1. on the exportation of wool and hides, from the tonnage and poundage, consisting of ten shillings on every ton of wine, and sixpence on every pound of goods, exported or imported; 2. and from the assessment of parishes. The last was always granted by parliament; the two former were frequently levied by royal authority alone. On the whole, however, much was gained in the reign of Edward: what was before mere *right*, became recognised *in practice*, — an advantage attributable not so much to the justice of the monarch as to the liberality of the representatives. No king loves unpopularity; and so long as Edward could obtain what he wanted from the voluntary suffrage of his people, he was sufficiently disposed to forego the exercise of his prerogative. — 5. The change in the composition of the army deserves a passing notice. The feudal service of forty days was little favourable to the projects of ambition. To see themselves deserted in the midst of their successes by the bulk of their military followers, who had performed their engagements, and

were unwilling to remain, was deeply mortifying to the Norman princes. Hence they were eager to accept pecuniary aids instead of personal service ; and that aid many vassals were disposed to give in preference to encountering the dangers and fatigues of a foreign expedition. With the money thus raised, mercenaries could be hired for a whole campaign. In domestic emergencies, however, positive orders were sent to the sheriffs to return every man capable of bearing arms who was rated at a certain sum ; sometimes a certain number only were required from each shire ; in neither case could pecuniary composition be received. Thus, in the expeditions to Scotland or Wales, service, either personal or by substitute, was obligatory. The levies thus assembled consisted of four species of combatants. First were the *men-at-arms*, the heavy cavalry, encumbered from head to foot by a covering of defensive armour of iron, and using the lance, the sword, the battle-axe, and the mace. These were the knights with their esquires. Every man who held a knight's fee, or land of the annual value of fifty pounds, was compelled to receive the honour of knighthood. Writs were frequently issued to ascertain the incomes of the free tenants in each county ; and every individual found in possession of the qualification was compelled to receive the distinction. It was no longer an honour, but a burden ; such, at least, it was considered by the smaller proprietor, who would gladly have escaped the obligation of appearing, at his own expense, in the field, attended by his esquire and other armed domestics. In the second place, we read of *hoblers*, a species of light cavalry, consisting of men rated between fifteen pounds and fifty. But the main strength of the army lay in the *archers*, who always fought on foot. Archery was certainly known to the Anglo-Saxons ; but its perfection must be sought in the time of the Plantagenets. The usual length of the bow was six, of the arrow three, feet. This formidable weapon was drawn, not

horizontally, but vertically — not to the breast, but to the ear ; and, at the distance of twelvescore yards, good execution could be done. So important was this art, that proclamation was made for its exercise on all Sundays and holydays, except during the hours of divine service. Each knight was careful to secure a few trusty archers whenever he advanced to the field ; and Edward himself had a body guard of 120, esteemed the strongest men in his kingdom. In the last place were the foot soldiers, armed with lances and bills, who had no defensive armour beyond skull caps, mailed gloves, and quilted jackets. — 6. The *navy* consisted of a few galleys and ships belonging to the crown ; of fifty-seven sail furnished by the Cinque Ports, in accordance with the conditions of their charter ; of galleys hired from the Pisans and Genoese ; and of merchantmen which the crown pressed into its service from the different ports of the kingdom.*

The progress of the commons towards independence, as a branch of the legislature, is, however, by far the most curious subject of speculation during these ages. Under Edward III., as we have seen, that progress was rapid. If the three essential principles to which we have adverted in the opening of his reign were met with some degree of encouragement under that prince, under the feeble Richard II. they were more boldly proclaimed. In concert with each other, the two houses, during the minority of Richard, usurped the virtual government of the kingdom. Though, in the preceding reign, the commons, even on the royal invitation, had declined to offer any opinion on a subject so high as peace or war, the decision of which, as they truly asserted, lay with the king, they were now ready to dictate, not only in regard to it, but to others of even greater moment. It was only

* Authorities : — The Rolls of Parliament, the *Fœdera of Rymer*, and Lingard, *History of England*, vol. iii.

during a minority, when the monarch was weak, or personally obnoxious, or involved in difficulties, that they ventured to remonstrate : under a vigorous and firm executive, they were so far from making new demands, that they forbore to advance the privileges which, on former occasions, had been recognised as their own. The conduct of the crown was marked by equal policy. In times of difficulty or of danger, when money was to be gained, or impending evils to be averted, it conceded every thing that was demanded ; when the emergency was past, it revoked or evaded every thing which it had conceded. During several ages, we meet with altercations of submission and of resistance in the transactions of the commons with the crown : by degrees, however, concessions formed a strong body of precedents in their favour, which the government, though resolved to evade, was compelled to treat with outward respect. Some, which the commons had never demanded, and which, to secure the favour of the people, were the voluntary act of the crown, were carefully recorded ; and, at a seasonable time, made to form the basis of new demands. The firm structure of English freedom is founded on the necessities or weakness of our monarchs, not on any abstract notions of justice : its erection has cost the struggles of centuries ; the work has often been impeded, sometimes made to retrograde, but always to be resumed on a fitting occasion. Richard was frequently compelled to comply with the requests of the lower house, which made such compliance the inevitable condition of a subsidy ; — obliged, not only to see his favourite ministers impeached, but to sanction a commission for reforming the abuses of his own government ; to see the royal power transferred from his hands to those of parliament, — this poor creature lost all claim to the respect of the nation. His violence of temper, as impotent as it was unbecoming, exasperated many ; his duplicity alienated more. We have seen how advantage was taken of his unpopularity by a party of discontented nobles ; and

how, with scarcely a struggle, the sceptre was transferred from his hands to the house of Lancaster.*

Of that house three princes successively swayed the 1399 sceptre. *Henry IV.* (1399—1413) soon found that the throne of an usurper is not one of down. The very 1485. barons who had conspired to place him on it grew discontented, — doubtless because they discovered that the revolution had only substituted one master for another, and because obedience was too galling to be quietly paid. The desire of the earl of Northumberland, with some Welsh and Scottish chiefs, to hurl him from his throne, presented at first a formidable appearance; but by his activity, still more by the rashness of Percy, he assailed his enemies before their preparations were fully completed, and, after a bloody struggle, triumphed. The contentions which, during this period, divided the princes of France, seemed to offer a favourable occasion for obtaining some successes in that kingdom; but the efforts of his army were tedious, desultory, and obscure. *Henry V.* (1413—1422) reaped a harvest of glory in the fields of France. Eager to recover the provinces which had been lost during the decline of the last Edward's life, and even to prove his imaginary claims on the French crown, in 1415 he invaded that kingdom. The reduction of Harfleur was followed by the splendid victory of Agincourt, and that victory by the submission of all northern and western France. By a solemn treaty with the royal family of that nation, he was appointed regent, and declared heir to that crown, partly in virtue of his victory, partly through his marriage with Catherine, daughter of the reigning king, Charles VI. During the last two years of his life he wielded the destinies of that great kingdom: had he lived a few years longer, he would have united it for a time — in the nature of things the union could not have been permanent — to his English possessions. His death made no immediate

* Founded on the histories of the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II., or the third volume of Lingard's History, and on the judicious work of Hallam, part iii. chap. 8.

change in the treaty of Troyes.* On the contrary, as that event was followed by the decease of Charles VI., and as, in consequence of the treaty, the infant *Henry VI.* (1422—1461) was now the heir to the crown, he was actually proclaimed king of France and England. Charles VII., however, was acknowledged by the southern provinces, and his cause was dear to all who had either loyalty or patriotism. How the Maid of Orleans roused the slumbering embers of loyalty, and infused her own enthusiasm into other breasts; and how a course of hostilities commenced, which ended in the expulsion of the English, are known to every reader. In the character of Henry, we find nothing but weakness, accompanied by its never-failing attendant, the ambition of unprincipled favourites. The country was at length a prey to civil war,—the house of York, which, like that of Lancaster, was descended from Edward III., taking advantage of the general discontent to struggle for the crown. After a disastrous succession of bloody contentions, the royal or Lancastrian party was subdued by its rival, and it was agreed that Henry should retain the crown during his life, but that the succession should devolve on the duke of York. This reconciliation, however, was broken by the queen, who could not, as a mother, witness the exclusion of her son, the young Edward, from the throne of his ancestors. The battle of Wakefield placed York in the hands of the queen, and brought him to the scaffold; but he had a son remaining, to whom he left as a legacy his honours, his ambition, and a formidable party. The young duke triumphed, and was proclaimed king in London, under the name of *Edward IV.* (1461—1483.) This elevation of the house of York was agreeable to the nation; yet why, can never be explained: for the princes of that house had few claims to respect; while Henry, though a weak, was a virtuous monarch. On the accession of Edward, his rival, or rather queen Margaret, was yet in the field. The battle

* See Vol. II. p. 84.

of Towton, the most bloody ever fought in England, established the throne of the new king, and forced Henry, with Margaret and their son, to take refuge in Scotland. The active Margaret, however, sustained the loyalty of her friends, and re-appeared in arms. The battle of Hexham was, for a while, fatal to her hopes. Henry assumed a disguise, fled into Lancashire, was taken, and committed to the Tower of London; but Margaret escaped to France. An army, under the earl of Warwick, expelled Edward from the kingdom; and Henry was reconducted from a prison to the throne. But his restoration was of short continuance: Edward returned from Burgundy with a small army, marched to London, and again wrested the crown from the feeble Henry. The battle of Barnet followed, in which the partisans of the house of Lancaster were signally routed. To restore the greatness of that house, the restless queen Margaret now landed with another army: her defeat at Tewkesbury (1471) destroyed her hopes for ever; her only son perishing in the pursuit, and herself falling into the hands of the victor. The same year witnessed the death of Henry; which, notwithstanding the popular impression to the contrary, appears to have been a natural event. Edward survived his restoration about twelve years. By his death the crown devolved on his son, *Edward V.*, yet a child: in three months it was usurped by his brother, *Richard III.* (1483—1485), the last prince of the house. That the young Edward, with a brother who resided in the Tower, were put to death by the command of their uncle, is one of the darkest events of this bloody time. In two years, the murderous usurper found a formidable rival in the head of the Lancastrian party, the young earl of Richmond, who, in the battle of Bosworth Field, ended his empire and his life. With the victor, Henry VII., commences a period which does not fall within the limits of this work.*

* This paragraph has been condensed from Turner's History, vol. iii.

The troubled period during which the houses of Lancaster and York held the sceptre would seem to afford few materials for political history; yet we find that it enabled the house of commons to make some advance in its authority. It is the invariable policy of usurpers to win, by concessions, the respect which they cannot claim by lawful inheritance: Henry IV. paid assiduous court to all classes, especially to the commons, whom he justly regarded as an unerring indication of popular opinion and feeling. Their right to tax the country, and to demand an account of the way in which the supplies were expended; their privilege of demanding redress of acknowledged abuses whenever they were required to vote a subsidy; their office as guardians, however self-constituted, of the people; and their duty to remonstrate with the administration whenever it deviated from former professions, that monarch never attempted to call in question, though he was more than once compelled to vindicate his own authority, from their systematic encroachments. Henry V. was too busily occupied with his conquests to have leisure for domestic concerns, and too anxious for continual supplies to think of offending the house. By desiring them to confirm his foreign treaties, he recognised in them a right which his predecessors of the Plantagenet family would have scouted with contempt,—that of interfering in the most momentous political affairs. The minority of Henry VI. added to their influence. The discussion of all affairs, whether foreign or domestic, they no longer enjoyed by sufferance, but claimed as a right; and when that monarch reached maturity, he was unqualified to hold the reins of government, which he abandoned to the guidance of his ministers, men of little principle, whom the commons could condemn with more freedom than a royal delinquent. The arbitrary temper, however, of his queen, Margaret of Anjou, who held unbounded influence over him, rendered him as unpopular as if he had possessed the worst instead of the best qualities of heart. With the house of York,

however, appeared an hostility to popular liberty, which the country had not seen since the time of the despicable John. In fact, from the accession of Edward IV. to that of Henry VII. there was no such thing as the operation of law. These twenty-five years are the most gloomy, the most disastrous, perhaps, in the English annals. The tame submission with which the commons crouched before these abominable princes, Edward and Richard, is not very honourable to their character: it adds another to the many proofs exhibited by their own journals, that, while they can be courageous before wómen and children, they quail before determined tyrants.*

Before we conclude this chapter, we shall make a few such general observations on the legislative and executive branches of our constitution, as could not well be inserted at any particular period in the preceding rapid sketch of its history.

1. The house of commons, as the undoubted bulwark of English liberty, however that bulwark may have been prostrated in times of civil commotion, has especial, and, we may add, affectionate claims on our notice. There is much obscurity as to the election of members, as to the qualification of the members themselves, and as to the places which exercised the suffrage. We know, indeed, that every county returned its two knights; but whether these knights were considerable landowners themselves, or only members of noble families, is doubtful; and what class of persons exercised the suffrage, — whether the tenants in capite only, or all freeholders. The latter is certainly the more probable hypothesis. Still greater uncertainty exists as to what towns and boroughs — there can be little doubt as to the *cities* — returned burgesses to the early parliaments. Originally such places only appear to have had the privilege as were empowered to exercise it by a

* Hallam's *State of Europe*, vol. iii. *passim*. Lingard, *History of England*, vol. iii. p. 316—324. No language can boast of more careful or more judicious enquiries than these into the constitution of nations.

special writ from the crown, which chiefly summoned such as were more immediately dependent on itself. We have already shown that the election was considered a burden, not as an honour; since the towns were thereby compelled both to tax themselves and to support their deputies. Much, however, rested on the discretion of the sheriff, who was required, in general terms, to return knights for the shire, two citizens from each city, two burgesses from each borough. His duty, doubtless, compelled him to select such as were most popular and opulent; yet we often find that many of them were passed over, while others of very inferior importance were chosen; and what increases the confusion of our notions on the subject is the fact, that the places which were represented in one parliament were not necessarily represented in the next. Sometimes a borough, which had exercised the privilege in two or three sessions, was passed over, in favour of one which had never been represented; often a well-known borough, after sending deputies to several parliaments, was allowed to rest a few sessions, when it was again summoned. From these facts it would appear that, as the selection was burdensome, and sought to be evaded, the object of the sheriff was to impose that burden successively on the towns within his jurisdiction, that none might have reason to complain of partiality; but it is equally probable that this functionary was often bribed to make no return of certain boroughs. One thing is undoubted, that there was no uniformity in the system; which, in reality, seems to have been directed as much by chance, or caprice, as by any recognised principle. Thus, in the twelfth year of Edward III., after returning two citizens for Salisbury, and deputies for two boroughs only, the sheriff of Wiltshire writes on the writ, "There are no other cities or boroughs in my bailiwick;" though there were eight other towns which had recently been in the actual exercise of the privilege. Thus, also, in the preceding reign, the sheriff of Bucks declared that there was no town but Wycombe liable to send deputies; yet Wendover,

Agmondesham, and Marlow had in that very reign each returned two.—What description of persons were chosen for burgesses, when we read that each was paid for his attendance in parliament at the rate of two shillings a day? We cannot suppose that they were necessarily rich, or even respectable; especially when we add, that some places sent no deputies, for no other reason than because they were too poor to maintain them: and, from the equally well-known fact, that even the shire knights were paid at the rate of four shillings daily, we may infer, that they were not necessarily men of landed estates, or of much other substance. That so pitiful a sum as two shillings a day for each burgess should have disposed the inhabitants of many boroughs to evade or set at defiance the sheriff's writ has filled some historical antiquarians with surprise. They appear, however, to have overlooked the value of money in these days, and the scanty population of some boroughs. The two shillings, in the reign of the second and third Edwards, were certainly equal to one pound of our present money; and we have reason to believe that the number of houses, in several boroughs, did not exceed two hundred; and, of that two hundred, probably not more than half would be able to contribute towards the support of the deputies. The sum of fourteen pounds per week, even at this day, would not willingly be defrayed by one hundred families. This consideration, however, would not alone explain the repugnance of some boroughs to return deputies: we must add the power, compulsorily vested in those representatives, to consent that their constituents should be taxed in proportion to their wealth and number. Undoubtedly the burden must have been heavy, or many towns, where the sheriff could not be induced to pass them over, would not have set his writ at defiance, and refused to proceed to an election. We know that, by so doing, many escaped the obligation, and were allowed in future to remain in their desired insignificance: some places, like Torrington and Colchester, applied to government

for charters of exemption from the burden of representation. — Who were the electors in the boroughs? “It appears,” says Hallam, “to have been the *common practice* for a very few of the principal members of the corporation to make the election in the county-court; and their names, as actual electors, are generally returned upon the writ by the sheriff.” According to this opinion, which is that of Dr. Brady, the original right of election was limited to the alderman and common council of each borough: but there could be no uniformity in this respect; for though instances enough might be adduced where the number of electors did not exceed from a dozen to a score, there are others which prove that the choice was made “*assensu totius communitatis*.” The same dissimilarity we find in county elections: sometimes they were very fully attended, sometimes a very few individuals returned the two knights; in both cases, the crown often used its influence. Thus, Richard II. on the eve of an election summoned several sheriffs before him, and enjoined them not to permit any knight or burgess to be returned, not approved by the king and council. The number of members elected varied, as may readily be inferred, at various periods, and even at periods closely connected with each other; yet no satisfactory reason can be given for the fluctuation which we sometimes find. On all occasions, however, the number of citizens and burgesses doubled that of the knights; for while we find the latter to have been almost uniformly seventy-four, the former was seldom below one hundred and fifty, sometimes two hundred. This difference would lead us to infer, that, as the decision of a question depended on mere suffrage, the county members must have bowed to the preponderating majority of their municipal colleagues. But the fact was otherwise. The minority had, beyond all doubt, the chief influence within the walls of the house. “The dignity of ancient lineage,” says Mr. Hallam, “territorial wealth, and military character, in times when the feudal spirit was hardly extinct, and that of

chivalry at its height, made these burghers veil their heads to the landed aristocracy." We know not that this assumption, for such it is, will remove the difficulty. From a reason already assigned, viz. the allowance of daily wages to the county members, who were not necessarily knights, we may doubt whether they had much wealth at command, whatever might be their descent. Let the cause have been whatever it may, the fact is certain that these representatives had both more influence and more patriotism than the burgesses; it is they, as the same author truly asserts, "who sustained the chief brunt of battle against the crown." To oppose them, the crown sometimes procured the election of lawyers, and others of its creatures, to sit in the house; but this abuse seems to have ended in the reign of Henry VII.*

II. The constitution of the house of lords is not less obscure than that of the commons. Originally, indeed, the great tenants in capite, whether temporal or spiritual barons, were the only members; for, though the great officers of the state and kingdom had a seat, all were barons. But baronies were in time divided, until the number of this privileged class became too great to attend collectively. To remove this inconvenience, writs began to be issued to the chief barons of the realm; so that, from this time, which was certainly anterior to the reign of Henry III., two circumstances, we are told, were necessary to constitute a lord of parliament — baronial tenure and the writ. But though it is certain that tenure without summons did not entitle any one to a seat in the house, we may reasonably doubt whether the converse of the proposition be equally true. Under the reign of the first three Edwards, we may plausibly infer there were members by writ who had not the qualification by tenure. What confirms this hypothesis is the undeniable fact, that some were summoned whose

* Brady's *History of England* (Appendix, vol. ii.). Brady on *Boroughs*, pp. 97—136. Willis, *Notitia Parliamentaria*, vol. ii. et iii. *passim*. Hallam, *State of Europe*, vol. iii. p. 165, &c.

fathers had never enjoyed the honour, and whose sons did not enjoy it after them. Frequently, too, the same person was, perhaps, summoned once or twice only in his whole life ; while others, who appear to have been greater barons, were present in every session. From the time of Edward III., especially in the reign of his grandson Richard, we read of *bannerets* in parliament. Were they barons ? Selden replies in the affirmative ; but, apparently, on a misconception of their rank ; for in two or three records they are distinguished from the barons by tenure : they seem, in fact, to have been an intermediate order between knights of the shire and barons. But their existence, as an order, did not extend beyond the reign of Henry VI. ; the very name now fell into disuse, remaining only to puzzle the antiquary. We have, however, a strong impression that they were the younger sons or nephews of barons, admitted to the honour of knighthood, and holding from their fathers or brothers, or uncles, a portion of land on the usual tenure : as such, they might, without any offence to the barons, be summoned to parliament. That summons, we think, conferred no hereditary distinction : it was merely personal, if we may judge from the fact before stated, — that many were there whose fathers had not enjoyed, and whose sons did not afterwards enjoy, the privilege ; and that some were summoned once only in their whole lives, while others appear in three or four, a few in every session, of which the records have descended to us. Again, some members of the lords are distinguished by the title of *sire*, as sire de Roos, sire Fitz-Hugh, while others are simply termed *monsieur*, as monsieur Henry Percy, monsieur Richard Scrope. These names, with many others, appear in the first parliament of Henry IV. Were the sires barons, the *monsieurs* bannerets ? Henry Percy, the celebrated Hotspur, was eldest son to the earl of Northumberland, — as proud, surely, as any baron among them, — yet a baron himself he could not well be during his father's life. The appearance of his name confirms the hypothesis we

have ventured to form, that the bannerets were knights of baronial families. Barons were sometimes created by the crown, at the instance of parliament, and sometimes by patent, at the mere pleasure of the monarch. Whether the dignity conferred by such creations was in all cases hereditary we much doubt; but, as we have not the means to prosecute the enquiry, we content ourselves with the mere statement of an impression.*

III. Still ascending in the scale of dignity, we come to the king's court or council, which anciently consisted of the great temporal and spiritual barons only, but into which were subsequently admitted the law officers of the crown. Owing, doubtless, to the multiplicity of the affairs brought under its cognisance, in the reign of John, it diverged, as we have before related, as far as regards its judicial character, into three great channels, the king's bench, common pleas, and exchequer. Yet, the council, both as a supreme court of appeal, and as cognisant of certain causes, even in the first instance, had still judicial functions of considerable extent, and was legislative as well as judicial; for we frequently find acts emanating from it as binding as those passed with the concurrence of parliament. They were, however, rather ordinances than statutes; their application was generally partial, their duration temporary: in fact, they were often issued at the express instance of the commons, when the occasion which demanded them was not judged to be sufficiently important for a new law. The privilege, however, was abused by most of our kings, who, instead of confining its exercise exclusively to the cases within which parliament wished it to remain, were seldom backward to employ it in prejudice of the people. The members were, in addition, the advisers of the crown; and, though their consent was not absolutely necessary to its resolutions, in general there was sufficient harmony between them: whatever the nature of the

* Madox, *Baronia Anglica*, p. 42, &c. West, *Enquiry into the Manner of creating Peers*, passim. *Rolls of Parliament*, vol. ii. iii. and iv. passim. Selden's Works, vol. iii. p. 764. Hallam, *State of Europe*, vol. iii. p. 180, &c.

subject proposed, they were not much disposed to incur the royal displeasure by opposition ; they were the peculiar confidential servants of the monarch, and, as such, were too often ready to serve his worst designs against general or individual liberty. In reality, the policy of this council, in which were vested most of his prerogatives, or, rather, which was the instrument of his will, was to prevent the parliament from encroaching on the slightest of them, and even to overawe it in the exercise of its legitimate rights, whenever these rights were disagreeable to him. It was the mechanical tool of despotism, and was the more to be dreaded, as its powers, like those involved in the royal prerogative, were undefined. By degrees they were somewhat circumscribed ; but, even under the Lancastrian princes, they were still formidable enough to inspire alarm ; nor were they reduced to proper limits until the reign of the Stuarts. It has been said, that the royal prerogatives were conferred for the benefit of the people ; but the assertion is not warranted by experience. In the first place, they were never conferred at all, but were forcibly seized by successful despots. In the second, their exercise was often inconsistent with the public good. In its oldest and original sense, the prerogative meant no more than the advantage of one man to the injury of the many. Many of the more objectionable ones continued in force unto a recent period. Thus, purveyance*, the right of purchasing, without the owner's consent, whatever was required by the king ; of impressing horses and carriages for his use ; of providing lodges for his suite ; is one of the grievances of which we find perpetual complaints in our writers. Even when the king was not travelling,—the legitimate plea for the origin of the demand,—still he had a court which required maintenance, and troops who clamoured for provisions. The sheriffs of counties were accordingly ordered to seize a certain number of oxen, sheep, corn. &c., and despatch them to a certain place. In strict justice, these ought to have

* See page 133.

been paid for, — if under a certain value, on the spot ; if above it, by an order on the treasury, payable in three months ; — but payment was often evaded : the exchequer was generally empty, and the creditor obtained a mere barren promise. Thus, also, many feudal exactions — the forest laws, the jurisdiction of the constable and marshal — formed a portion of the prerogative, and led to abuses against which the people struggled for ages.*

But, with all these imperfections in their constitution, the English had greater liberty than any other people, if we except those of Scandinavia, perhaps, also, of Northern Germany ; and, without any exception more social comfort. We have seen how the more odious abuses were removed by the successive demands of the commons. There were several favourable circumstances on which to base that liberty. Thus, the peers were subject to the law, and made to contribute towards the support of the state, — facts which honourably distinguish the nation, and for the existence of which we should in vain ransack the codes of other countries. Again, in all ages, the character of an Englishman has possessed more seriousness, more gravity, more exemption from that spirit which prepares revolutions, than that of any other European. Instead of meeting with that love of change, which Cæsar rightly regards as one of the great characteristics of the Gauls, we find a sober attachment to what is really good in the constitution, and as sober a resolution of removing what is bad through the legitimate channel of complaint, the house of commons. The necessities of our old kings, who were more ambitious of extending their dominions in France, than of forging fetters for the people, rendered such frequent applications for subsidies inevitable, and so impossible to be obtained, without abolishing some odious abuse, that popular liberty slowly, indeed, but surely, forced itself into notice. And, even at the worst period, our ancestors had something to enjoy. To encourage commerce was the interest of our kings, since it opened them more speedy

* Hallam, *State of Europe*, vol. iii.

and considerable supplies than any other source. In the same degree it enriched that great portion of the people, the citizens and burghers. Even the vassals had rights not to be found elsewhere, since in this country the evils of feudal system were less intolerable. The concessions which the barons wrung from John, Henry III., Edward I., and other princes, descended to *their* dependents; so that the advantages of the victory were felt by the humblest ranks. The steps are hidden by which villenage was destroyed. One of them was, doubtless, by purchase: for a certain sum, or for certain profits, the lord gradually renounced the more onerous services. In fact, it was his interest, as commerce and population increased, to congregate his vassals in communities, and to grant them such charters as were likely to call forth their industry, and to enrich himself. These charters involved concessions; above all, that of holding lands by certain mitigated tenures, — a right formally recognised in written instruments, — transformed villeins into copyhold tenants. By these and other gradations, which it is impossible to trace, the great mass of English peasantry became farmers and hired labourers. Their existence is recognised in an ordinance of Edward III. In the time of Edward IV., their rights were so well understood, that they were empowered to bring actions against their lords. We must not, however, forget that, in times of violence, civil rights were little regarded; that violence would often restore the worst abuses of former periods. But, with the return of tranquillity, reparation was made; the recognition of one claim laid the foundation of another: the poor, in their efforts at emancipation, were assisted by the clergy and the house of commons; until flagrant oppression was no longer tolerable. There was still a struggle, however silent, between power and dependence: the causes which led to its conclusion belong to a period not comprised in the present design.*

* Sismondi, *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes, et Histoire des François*, passim. Hallam, vol. iii.

CHAP. II.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

ST. AUGUSTINE ARRIVES. — INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY SUCCESSIVELY INTO THE VARIOUS KINGDOMS OF THE HEP-TARCHY. — ROMANTIC ADVENTURES OF EDWIN. — SAINTS, FURSI; CHAD; BENEDICT BISCOP; CUTHBERT; WILFRID. — EDIL-TRYDA, AND OTHER FEMALE SAINTS. — GUTHLAKE THE HERMIT. — DAMNATION OF CEOLRED. — ST. JANA. — DECLINE OF RELIGION. — THE DANISH INVASIONS. — CAUSES OF DECLINE, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL. — ABSOLUTE ANNIHILATION OF THE MONASTIC INSTITUTION. — EFFORTS OF SEVERAL REFORMERS TO RESTORE IT, AND TO CONTROL THE LICENTIOUS MASS OF THE SECULAR CLERGY. — ST. ODO. — ST. DUNSTAN. — MARTYRDOM OF ST. ELPHEGE. — GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

1. FORTUNATELY for us, our present design does not involve the necessity of ascertaining when or by whom Christianity was originally introduced into the southern part of this island. It is sufficient to observe, that we find believers in the gospel as early as the second century, and that from this period the religion was never extinct among the Britons. When the Saxons invaded the country it was peopled by Christians only. If, however, the declamations of Gildas are to be received, the morals, at least, if not the opinions, of the people were lamentable. He asserts, that there was no fear of God, no love of man, among clergy or laity. Exaggerated as this statement may be, it is founded in truth; there was evidently no means of enforcing discipline: we may even doubt if there was such a thing as government in the British church. Bishops there evidently were from the third century; but they were indifferent to the ancient canons; they recognised no superior: and, even if they had been disposed to meet frequently in synodical councils, we may, when we con-

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to
596.

sider the number of British sovereignties, the endless wars between them, and the irruptions of the Picts, doubt whether they would have been able to effect much good. The absence of ecclesiastical authority, either as to discipline or faith, appears from the mission of two Gallic prelates into Britain, to examine the heresy of Pelagius. One of these prelates, Germanus of Auxerre, appears to have been admirably fitted for the ranks of the church militant. Having procured the condemnation of the heresy, he girt on his temporal armour; headed the Britons against the Picts and Saxons, who were plundering the coast, and signally defeated them. But, after the descent of Hengist, the sword of the Saxon was far more to be dreaded than the arms of heresy. The churches were every where destroyed; the priests were every where massacred: such of the laity as escaped that fate were probably doomed to slavery; so that in about a century, if not in a much less period, after the Saxon invasion, the British church was probably extinct in the parts subject to the Germanic yoke. In places, however,—and, in the first chapter of this book, we have seen that there were many such,—where the natives were enabled to maintain a species of independence, the Christian worship continued. Cornwall, Devon, Cumberland, part of Westmoreland, of Lancashire, of Cheshire, and all Wales, were still covered with churches. Nor is it improbable that the conquerors allowed their new slaves,—in districts, at least, where policy was more powerful than fanaticism,—some places of worship. This seems to be evident from the last paragraph in the history of Gildas. And, notwithstanding the vague declamations of that writer, nothing is more certain, than that the number of Christians in his days was very considerable. But their conduct was not calculated to recommend the gospel to the pagan strangers: in fact, they took no pains to preach it; they do not appear to have sent a single missionary into the counties inhabited by a people whom they at once feared and hated. Fortunately,

however, both for the spiritual interests of Britain, the chair of St. Peter was filled by a prelate who resolved to dispel the dark gloom of superstition by the effulgence of a divine religion, and whose name must be pronounced with veneration by every honest, candid, right-minded man.*

The circumstance which first drew the attention of St. Gregory to the state of Britain, — the sale of some English slaves in the market at Rome, — his resolution to preach the gospel in person to the Saxons, and the opposition raised to his departure by the inhabitants of the eternal city, are too well known to be detailed here. But if the pontiff was thus prevented from personally labouring in the missionary field, he took care to despatch others on whom he could rely. Of Augustine, the prior of the monastery which he had founded in Rome †, whom he placed over the present mission, we hear for the first time. Of the prior's birth, character, and previous life, no record remains. On reaching the foot of the Gallic Alps, however, his monastic companions were so terrified by the reports of the barbarity of the Anglo-Saxons, that they sent him back to the pope to procure their exemption from the dangerous mission. But Gregory, who had set his heart on the conversion of these distant barbarians, would hear of no excuse: he implored, exhorted, commanded, them to proceed. He justly observed, that to renounce a good work once commenced was far more disgraceful than not to have undertaken it at all; and added, "Let neither the fatigue of the journey, nor the tongues of evil speakers, deter you; but, trusting in God, with all haste, with all fervour, persevere; since you know, that the greater your labour, the brighter will be the glory of your eternal reward. In all things

* Gildas, *Historia Britannicæ*, pp. 9—17. necnon *Epistola ejusdem*, p. 18. &c. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. i. (variis capitulis.) Nennius, *Historia Britonum*, cap. 29. ad finem. Paulus Diaconus, *Vita S. Gregorii Magni* (apud Mabillon *Acta Sanctorum Ordin. S. Benedicti*, tom. i. p. 398, &c.).
 † See Vol. I. p. 192.

humbly obey Augustine, your prior, whom we constitute your abbot, knowing that such obedience must in all be to the profit of your souls. May the Almighty God protect you by his grace, and give me to behold the fruit of your endeavours in the eternal world! and, though I cannot labour in person with you, I shall yet partake in your recompense, since I have urged you to the present work. May God, dearest children, be your defender!" At the same time, the zealous pontiff wrote to the princes and prelates of Gaul, whom he besought to aid, in every possible way, the adventurous missionaries. In consequence of these letters, some Gallic ecclesiastics, acquainted with the language of the Saxons, were chosen to accompany Augustine and his companions. In 597, they landed on the Isle of Thanet; doubtless from a conviction that, of all the kingdoms, Kent was that which opened the most probable door to success: for the queen of Ethelbert was a Christian princess from Gaul, and the province was much more humanised, from its contiguity to the continent, than any of the rest. Ethelbert, who could not be ignorant of the religion which they desired to introduce, ordered them to be provided with necessaries, and to await his pleasure. Shortly he repaired to the island, to hear the object of their mission. When seated under an oak, he soon beheld the ecclesiastics advance, one of them bearing a large crucifix, another a picture of Christ, and all joining in the chant of psalms, supplicating the Most High for the conversion of the natives. To the discourse of Augustine the king lent a patient, thoughtful ear, and replied, "Your words are fair; but, because they are new and uncertain, I cannot, for them, forsake the faith which I, and the whole nation of Angles, have hitherto followed. Yet, since you have arrived from a distant country, with the view of teaching me and my people what ye believe to be true and excellent, we will not allow you to be molested - but, rather, hospitably received: we will see that you are provided with whatever may be necessary for your support; nor do we

forbid any of our subjects, who may be so disposed, from joining you." Placed in the capital, Canterbury, and enabled to rebuild a ruined church outside the walls, — a sad memento of the revolution in faith, — the missionaries began earnestly to preach the gospel. The sincerity of their morals, the purity of their lives, availed them more than eloquence. Despising, says the venerable Bede, all the things of this world, as alien to them; receiving only the food necessary for their support; living in strict accordance with the duties they taught; ready to suffer, and, if need were, to die, for the truth of what they professed; constant in prayer, fasting, vigils, and in preaching the word of life, their conduct could not fail to make some impression. At first, a few believed: the example was followed by others; until the altars of Odin lost many worshippers. The pagan religion soon received a fatal blow in the conversion of Ethelbert himself, whose previous caution deserves the praise of posterity, and by that of 10,000 Saxons, who accompanied him to the baptismal font. To the honour, however, of the royal convert, no less than of his teachers, he did not compel his people to receive the new religion: they were zealously invited to hear its doctrines, but were allowed, if they pleased, to retain the faith of their fathers. This policy was, and must always be, successful; in a short time, without bloodshed, without a struggle, every idol was forsaken, and Christianity established. Two churches for the use of the converts, and a monastery for that of the ecclesiastics, speedily arose in Canterbury. Elated with his success, the pope conferred on him the archiepiscopal dignity, attaching to Canterbury the primacy over all the sees that might be founded. Gregory, who saw the conversion of the whole people, ordered that another metropolis should be erected at York, whenever Northumbria should be made to forsake its idols: but even then the metropolitan was to acknowledge a primacy of jurisdiction in the successors of St. Augustine.*

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. i. cap. 25—30. Goscelinus, *Historia Minor de Vita S. Augustini* (various capitulis). S. Gregorii Magni

601 The first bishop consecrated by the hands of the
 to new metropolitan was Justus of Rochester ; the second
 604. was Melitus of London : the latter, as well as the former,
 within the government of Ethelbert. The contiguity
 of Essex to Kent, and the fact that Saberct, the nephew
 of Ethelbert, reigned in the former kingdom, caused
 Augustine to direct his first cares towards it. Mellitus,
 prior to his consecration, was received by Saberct with
 respect, and Christianity was peaceably introduced.
 The conversion of two kingdoms is honourable alike to
 the zeal and prudence of Augustine ; but they did not
 satisfy him : he aspired to that of the whole island.
 For this gigantic labour, however, the ecclesiastics
 who obeyed him, including some whom the pope had
 recently sent him, were lamentably inadequate. In
 this emergency, and confiding in the metropolitan
 character, which had recently been conferred on him
 over all the churches of Britain, he cast his eyes
 on the British prelates, whom he longed to secure
 as co-operators in the great work. But, from the
 description we have before given of that body*, they
 were not likely to submit to the control of so
 severe a censor. Emboldened by the utter laxity of
 discipline which had so long prevailed, and by the im-
 punity which, in their dissolute lives, they had so long
 enjoyed ; and, probably, little disposed to receive the
 yoke of a foreign church, they not only showed—what,
 indeed, they had always shown—a resolution to let
 the heathens perish in idolatrous darkness, but to reject
 every overture ; nay, even the communion of the mis-
 sionaries. Whether there was any essential difference
 in doctrines, at least, between the two parties, has
 given rise to much bitter controversy among religious
 polemics. All that we can gather on the subject, is

Epistolæ ad Varios (apud Bedam, lib. i., necnon in Append. 6.). Bollen-
 distæ, Acta Sanctorum, Die Maii x. c. Baronius, Annales Ecclesiastici
 (sub annis). Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonica, tom. ii. (sub
 annis). Mabillon, Acta Sanctorum Ord. S. Ben., i. 503.

* See page 153. of the present volume.

from the two celebrated interviews which, through the influence of Ethelbert, the archbishop obtained with the chief ecclesiastics, apparently on the confines of Cheshire and Wales. In the first, he exhorted them to forsake their local customs, and join him in preaching the gospel to the Saxons. Of these customs, the only one specified by Bede regarded the time of observing Easter; yet, that there were many others, is plainly intimated in the words, "*Sed et alia plurima unitati ecclesiasticæ contraria faciebant.*" Neither a long disputation, nor the operation of two miracles*, could overcome the obstinacy of the natives; but they at length agreed to convoke another synod, more numerous and imposing than the present. This second meeting was attended by seven bishops and the abbot of Bangor. In the interval, they consulted a hermit famous for sanctity and wisdom. "If he be a man of God," said the sage, "follow him."—"But how are we to know this?" was the natural enquiry.—"By his humility," was the substance of the reply. "Let Augustine and his companions arrive at the place of meeting before you. If he rise to receive you, listen to him; if he remain seated, reject him for his pride." On this occasion Augustine, doubtless, wished to make the points of difference between him and them as few as possible; and we accordingly find, that he reduced his demands to three:—that they would observe the same time of keeping Easter; that they would baptize in the Roman method; that they would join him in preaching to the Saxons. "As for the other points," he added, "which are contrary to our customs, we will cheerfully tolerate them." But Augustine had committed the unpardonable sin of remaining seated; they indignantly refused to hear him, or to acknowledge his archiepiscopal jurisdiction; and both parties separated in discontent—even in anger. At this moment the rejected metropolitan is said (*fertur*) to have predicted that, since they

* If the miracles were really performed, would the Britons have so obstinately rejected his authority?

refused to have peace with their brethren, they should have war from an enemy ; that, since they were unwilling to preach the way of life to the Angles, by the Angles should they perish.—What are we to infer from the foregoing relation by the venerable Bede, the most ancient authority we have? Rejecting the sophistry of disputants, to whom party is almost always dearer than truth, two inferences seem to be clearly deducible from it. 1st. That the points of difference regarded discipline only ; for had there been any in doctrine, would Augustine have so earnestly entreated men, whom he must have considered as heretics, to join him in the important duty of preaching? * 2d. That the native prelates had not been accustomed to acknowledge the supremacy of the pope, is evident. In fact, no one can doubt, that their chief object was to secure the independence of their church ; probably, also, to evade the authority of a stern ecclesiastical ruler, who they well knew would chastise their irregularities. This inference, uncharitable as it may appear, is confirmed by the testimony of Gildas ; whose picture of their character is, as we have before seen, most revolting. Thus, the hostile disputants are wrong, — the protestants in maintaining, without even the shadow of authority, that Augustine and the British prelates differed in doctrine ; and the Roman Catholics in affirming, that the British church was subject to the jurisdiction of the pope. A more baseless assertion remains to be noticed. The prediction of the archbishop seemed to be verified, when Edilfrid, king of Northumbria, invaded Wales, overthrew the army

* “ He (Augustine) found here a plain religion (simplicity is the badge of antiquity) practised by the Britons ; living, some of them in contempt, and many more in ignorance, of worldly vanities. He brought in a religion spun with a coarser thread, though guarded with a finer trimming ; made luscious to the senses with pleasing ceremonies ; so that every one who could not judge of the goodness, were courted with the gaudiness, thereof.” — *Fuller*.

This is all very fine writing ; but, so far as we can judge, it is fine writing only. It has no foundation whatever in ancient authority ; to which, on the contrary, it is decidedly opposed.

opposed to him, and massacred twelve hundred monks of Bangor*, who had taken refuge on a neighbouring hill. This massacre is said by Geoffrey of Monmouth to have been effected by the influence of St. Augustine and of Ethelbert; — by the former, because he could not pardon the rejection of his authority; by the latter, because he could not forgive the slight put upon his archbishop. Succeeding writers have gone farther, and asserted, that the metropolitan warmly exhorted the Saxon princes “to efface with the blood of his adversaries the insult which had been offered to his authority.” The latter assertion and, *à fortiori*, the former, is disproved by positive fact. That, long before the invasion of the Northumbrians, Augustine had paid the debt of nature †, is expressly asserted by Bede: that the massacre of the monks was owing to the accident of their appearance on a neighbouring hill, is manifest from the tenor of that historian’s text. Edilfrid enquired who and what they were. Hearing that they were praying for his destruction, he observed, “Though unarmed, if they pray, they also fight against us;” and ordered the hill to be stormed. In the whole range of hostile controversy, there is not a more atrocious or a more baseless charge than this brought against the English apostle. Geoffrey, the first who made it, lived 500 years after the event: even if *his* partiality to his British countrymen were less, and his authority as respectable as it is fabulous, no unbiassed mind would admit a charge, not merely unsupported, but absolutely disproved by ancient testimony.‡

* Not the present Bangor. The ancient Bangor was situated a few miles only from Chester, on the southern bank of the Dee.

† Ipso (Augustino) jam multo ante tempore ad cœlestia regna sublato.

‡ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. i. cap. 30, &c.; lib. ii. cap. 2. Langhorn, *Chronica*, p. 159. Parker, *De Antiquitate Ecclesiæ Britannicæ*, pp. 46—48. Goscelinus, *Historia Minor S. Augustini*, cap. 25. & 26. *Bollandistæ*, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Maii xxvi, et Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii. p. 66. *Alfordus*, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicæ*, tom. ii. p. 194. This last learned author has successfully vindicated St. Augustine from the injustice of modern felonies. So, also, has Mabillon (i. 523.), who evidently follows him; and Lingard (*Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 49.). Yet, in sight of such evidence, there are writers who still continue to charge St. Augustine with the massacre.

598. The correspondence of Augustine with pope Gregory acquaints us with some curious facts relative to the discipline of the infant church. As a monk, who had held little intercourse with the world, who was probably unlearned in the regulations of discipline, and who yet found himself elevated to a station which required a considerable knowledge of the canons, the archbishop frequently consulted his spiritual superior, perhaps the best canonist of that age. The replies of the pontiff exhibit much sound sense, and a laudable liberality; with a natural attachment to the ancient discipline, he yet shows a willingness to dispense with it wherever the circumstances of the case warrant such a dispensation. To nine questions prepared by Augustine, we have as many answers by the pontiff. 1. In the first, which regards the oblations of the faithful, Gregory approves the ancient practice,—that they should be divided into four parts; one for the support of the bishop's household, and for the exercise of hospitality; another for the inferior clergy; a third for distribution in alms; a fourth for the repair of churches. 2. May clerks who cannot contain themselves marry? and if they do marry, must they return to the world? The pope replies, that clerks in *minor orders* may marry.* 3. Though faith be one, observes Augustine, there is a diversity of rites in different churches: thus, in the Roman, mass is celebrated after one manner, in the Gallic, after another. “Thy fraternity,” replies the pope, “knows the custom of the Roman church, in which thou hast been educated. But I wish thee to choose whatever may seem most agreeable to God, whether thou find it in the Roman, or in any other church: introduce into the English church, which is yet in its infancy, whatever good thou canst collect from many: the thing must not be loved for the place, but the place for the thing.” In accordance with this wise counsel, and, in fact, by the express permission of the

* This question is not in Bede; but it is in the correspondence of St. Gregory, and inserted by Wilkins in the collection of councils.

pope, Augustine did not destroy the heathen temples, but transferred them into churches : he did not abolish the pagan festivals, but sanctified them to a Christian use. Thus, the more solemn periods of pagan worship, where sacrifices were offered, and festivity was joined with devotion, were changed to the feasts of Christian martyrs : in the vicinity of the churches, as formerly in that of the temples, tents were erected ; and, when the service was past, the people were allowed to eat and drink, but were enjoined to use the liberty with a sobriety which had been unknown to their pagan forefathers, and which few, probably, of themselves would have resolution enough to observe.* 4. To the question, What punishment is to be inflicted on the stealer from a church, — other cases of theft were, of course, cognisable by the civil law, — Gregory replies, that a distinction should be made between those who steal through want, and those whom want does not afflict ; and that the chastisement must be apportioned accordingly ; in the one case more, in the other fewer, stripes. Yet, even when the crime was more aggravated, he enjoins, that the chastisement be applied in love, not in anger ; lest a soul should be sent to the fires of hell. In our corrections of the faithful, he adds, with equal truth and feeling, we must imitate worldly parents ; who, though they inflict pain on their sons, yet design these sons to possess their inheritance : as spiritual parents, we must prepare our offspring for the inheritance on high : let the same love be in us as in them. Thou askest what amount of compensation will satisfy the church.† God forbid that the church should gain from her own losses — that she should profit from crime. 5. May two brothers marry two sisters ? By all means : no where in Scripture are such marriages

* The wake is a legitimate vestige of the Saxon superstitions. Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, by Ellis, i. 423.

† The successors of Augustine, however, reverted to the ancient Germanic penalty : — the thing stolen was to be restored so many fold, sometimes fourfold, sometimes ninefold. See the laws in the preceding chapter.

forbidden. 6. In what degree of consanguinity may marriages be contracted? May stepmothers marry with the sons of their deceased husbands by a former connection? To the former question the reply is, that cousins-german ought not to marry, though authorised by the civil law; but second cousins may. Marriages of the latter description, which were common among the pagan Saxons, are rigorously interdicted. Passing over the seventh and eighth questions, which regard the consecration of bishops, and the jurisdiction of Canterbury, we shall be more forcibly struck by the ninth than by any of the preceding. 9. May a pregnant woman be baptized? What time must elapse after her confinement before she is admitted into the church? Lest the infant should die, after how many days may it be baptized? These and other like questions, as every student in ecclesiastical antiquity must know, were once thought of sufficient importance to occupy the attention of grave synods, and even national councils: they characterise the times and the religion more completely than any historic description. To the first St. Gregory replies by another: — as fecundity is no crime in the sight of God, why should not a pregnant woman be baptized? If God, he proceeds, visited the sin of our first parents with the loss of immortality, he has yet left immortality to the human race through the medium of generation. Since, then, the propagation of the species is the gift of God, why should the recipient of that gift be debarred from the grace of baptism, — a mystery, too, in which all iniquity is cleansed? As to the question, how soon after parturition a woman may enter the church, Thou hast read in the Old Testament that, for a male, she should abstain thirty, for a female child, sixty-six days. Yet this is to be spiritually understood. If, even at the moment of parturition, she could possibly enter a church to return thanks, she might innocently do so; for the sin consists not in the pain of the birth, but in *voluptate carnis*. If, however, we forbid a woman

just made a mother to enter the house of God, we convert her punishment into a crime.

The miracles recorded of St. Augustine and his companions, as wrought to secure the success of their mission, have been fiercely debated. In the history of that mission we meet them at every page: they are acknowledged by the pope; who, in one letter, earnestly exhorts him to watchfulness, lest spiritual pride should puff him up:—

“ I know, dearest brother, that Almighty God has, through thee, in sight of the nation which he chose to himself, wrought great marvels. In this celestial gift thou hast reason both to rejoice and to fear; to rejoice in that the minds of the English have, by external miracles, been attracted to internal grace; and to fear, lest, among the signs which are wrought, thine infirm mind should swell with presumption, and, while outwardly elevated in honour, it fall inwardly through vain glory. Let us remember, that when the disciples, joyfully returning from preaching, said to their heavenly Master, ‘ Lord, through thy name even devils obey ! ’ they were answered, ‘ Rejoice not for this, but, rather, rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’— ‘ Not all the elect have the gift of miracles; but the names of all are written in the book of life.’ ”

The two miracles to which we have alluded, as wrought by Augustine in presence of the British prelates,—one was the opening the eyes of the blind,—will enable the reader to judge what the wonders were, wrought by this apostle of England. But on what evidence do they rest? The testimony of Bede is that of a man who lived a full century after the event, and who is noted for credulity. That of St. Gregory is, indeed, contemporary; but was he an eye-witness? Might not common report, which bore the wondrous deeds to his ears, have exaggerated them as it went along, and found an implicit belief in one more credulous than even Bede himself? Did St. Augustine really lay claim to the gift of miracles? These questions cannot be satisfactorily answered: we have, unfortunately, no biographer who witnessed his life and conversation; none who was contemporary with him; none older than the Venerable,

who acquired his information from the uncertain voice of tradition, distorted by the credulity of a century. From Bede to Goscelin, the second biographer of St. Augustine ; that is, from the eighth to the eleventh century, the portentous tale was still farther amplified. This fact illustrates the natural progress of fable. If an eye-witness exist, he never, as such, — we confine our observations to the earlier ages of the church, — alludes to miracles. A distant contemporary often does ; but then, as his testimony rests on common fame, it is not entitled to much weight. The biographer of a century after the death of his subject, is at no loss to find wonders enough : three or four centuries more, and their number is prodigious. Those ascribed to St. Augustine rest on no foundation that can be recognised by any canon of criticism. Both he and St. Gregory were holy men : neither was capable of imposing on the world ; and, if it could be proved that Augustine actually laid claim to miracles ascribed to him, or that the pope was not misled by common fame, the controversy would be at an end.*

605 On the death of St. Augustine, in 605, he was suc-
to ceeded in his archiepiscopal see by his friend *St. Law-*
619 *rence*, a presbyter, and native of Rome ; the unfailing companion of his mission, from his arrival in England to his death. The primacy of this churchman was destined to be more troubled than that of his predecessor : both in Essex and in Kent Christianity was seriously endangered. The death of Saebert left the inheritance to his three pagan sons, who attempted to restore idolatry, and expelled Mellitus, bishop of London, from their kingdom. That city followed the example of the rest of Essex ; and Mellitus repaired to Rochester, where he hoped to obtain an asylum with his friend Justus. But he found both Lawrence and Justus in the same danger as himself ; as, in this country, the decess

* St. Gregorii Magni Epistolæ, vii. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. i. cap. 31. Goscelin, *Historia Minor de Vita S. Augustini (variis capitulis)*. Hollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Maii xxvi. Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.*, tom. i.

of Saberet, so in the other, that of Ethelbert, left the infant church to the mercy of heathens. Eadbald, the son of Ethelbert, had begun his reign with the profession of Christianity; but, having taken to his bed the youthful widow of his father, he was so offended with the denunciation of St. Lawrence, that he abandoned a religion which forbade the gratification of his passions. Seeing the triumph of paganism, Mellitus and Justus, apparently with some cowardice, returned to Gaul, and Lawrence himself prepared to follow the example. We give the following extraordinary relation in the words of Bede:—

“ When Lawrence was about to follow Mellitus and Justus, and bid adieu to Britain, he ordered, on the eve of his intended departure, that his pallet should be carried into the church of the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, which we have often mentioned. There, after much praying and weeping before God for the desolation of the church, he was no sooner asleep, than there appeared to him the most blessed prince of the apostles, who, having afflicted him with many stripes, asked him, at length, why he abandoned the flock committed to his charge by St. Peter himself; to what shepherd he confided the flock of Christ, surrounded by ravenous wolves. — ‘ Hast thou forgotten my example, who for Christ’s little ones, which, in his love, he had committed to me, suffered bonds, stripes, imprisonment, sorrows, nay death itself; — since I was destined to be crowned with him, — even the death of the cross, from his unbelieving enemies.’ Influenced by the stripes and the exhortations of the blessed Peter, however, the servant of Christ hastened, at daybreak, to the king; and, throwing off his garment, displayed his body, lacerated by the blows. In great astonishment, the king asked who had dared so cruelly to use such a man; and when he heard that, for his salvation, the bishop had suffered this severe treatment at the hands of Christ’s apostle, he was greatly terrified, insomuch that he cursed his idolatry, forsook his incestuous marriage, received the faith, was baptized, and ever afterwards endeavoured in all things to advance the interests of the church.”

To explain this transaction on natural grounds, has sadly perplexed most protestant writers; who justly refuse their credence to the miraculous part of the relation. “ It was all a vision,” cries one: — if it were, how

came the cruel laceration? "It was inflicted," cries a second, "by some clerical attendant, who represented himself as St. Peter, and easily deceived the surprised archbishop." But St. Lawrence was not so feeble of understanding as to be thus deluded by an imposition which could scarcely have affected a child. Struck with the untenable nature of these hypotheses, a third class of writers boldly pronounce the whole a pious fraud. Of this class Mr. Turner is the most modern representative.

"A simple contrivance of Lawrence, the successor of Augustine, affected the mind of Eadbald with alarm. He appeared before the king, bleeding with severe stripes; and boldly declared that he had received them in the night from St. Peter, because he was meditating his departure from the island. The idea was exactly level with the king's intellect and superstition. A strong sensation of fear that the same discipline might be inflicted, by the same invisible hand, on himself, changed his feelings, and he became a zealous friend to the new faith."*

If St. Lawrence could stoop to such a pitiful, we may add, such a bungling, piece of imposture, what would become of the *claritas doctrinæ et morum*, what of the enviable epithet *Deo dilectus*, with which all antiquity invested his name? We will not thus judge of the holy men to whom this nation is indebted for Christianity and civilisation. The only rational, as well as charitable, way of solving the difficulty is, to conclude that no such miraculous transactions either happened, or were asserted to have happened, until long after the archbishop had gone to his reward. In the present, as in the case of St. Augustine, the venerable Bede, who lived a century after both, is our only ancient authority. What had that credulous, however excellent, writer to guide him, beyond the muddy current of tradition? Whatever was the cause which prevented the archbishop's departure, it led to the return of Justus and Mellitus, and

* *Seite à Laurentio ista videntur conflictæ, ad stuporem regis ethnici.* — *Cent. Magdeb.* vii. This calumny calls forth, as it well may, the bile of father Alford.

to the immediate restoration of Christianity, not in Kent only, but in Essex, which appears to have been dependent on that kingdom.*

The third Anglo-Saxon kingdom which received Christianity was Northumbria, during the primacy of Mellitus and Justus ; who, after the death of St. Lawrence, successively filled the see of Canterbury. That important revolution, however, was not the work of either, but had been prepared by some interesting events. On the death of Ella, founder of the kingdom of Deira, the sceptre had devolved to his son, Edwin, an infant of three years. Edilfrid, king of Bernicia, invaded Deira, which he incorporated with his own dominions ; thus giving rise to the great kingdom of Northumbria. With difficulty the royal infant was removed from his reach, and carried into North Wales, where he was reared at the court of Cadvan, in a manner becoming his birth. But, as he grew up, the vengeance of Edilfrid pursued him ; and he repaired to the court of Redwald, king of the East Angles, who readily received him. Yet, even here, the same destiny pursued him. By the emissaries of Edilfrid, Redwald was offered a great sum of money on condition of surrendering the prince ; and, when the offer was rejected, a greater sum, or the declaration of war in case of refusal, was submitted to his choice. As the Northumbrian monarch was dreaded throughout all the Saxon kingdoms, the terrified or corrupted Redwald at length gave a reluctant promise that he would destroy or surrender his guest. The sequel we give in the graphic words of Bede : —

590
to
617.

“ A most faithful being gained a knowledge of this resolution, immediately entered the apartment in which Edwin was preparing to sleep (it was the first hour of the night), and, beckoning him outside the house, acquainted him with the

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. ii. cap. 4, 5, 6. Alcuinus, *Epistola* 97. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Feb. ii. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonice*, tom. ii. p. 203. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* ; et Fleury, *Histoire Ecclésiastique* (sub annis). *Centuriæ Magdeburgensis*, cent. vii. cap. 13. Parker, *De Antiquitate Ecclesiæ Britannicæ*, p. 49. Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. i. Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.*, tom. ii. pp. 60—62.

king's promise; and added, 'Even now, if thou pleasest, I will guide thee from this prince to a place where neither Redwald nor Ediltrid shall ever be able to find thee!' The prince replied, 'I thank thee for thy good will; but I cannot, as thou adviseth me, break my faith with the king, who has yet done me no evil, nor shown me any sign of ill-will. If I must die, the disgrace will not fall on me, but on my betrayer. Besides, whither can I, who have so long wandered from prince to prince, flee for security? how avoid the snares of my enemies?' The friend departing, Edwin remained alone; and, sorrowfully seating himself before the palace, he gave way to his melancholy reflections, ignorant what he should do, or whither he should bend his steps. And when he had been long absorbed in silent sorrow, he suddenly perceived, in the gloom of night, a stranger approach him; and the sight startled him. The stranger, drawing near, saluted him, and asked him why, at such an hour, when others were buried in sleep, he thus sat pensive and alone on the stone seat. But Edwin, in his turn, demanded, 'What does it concern thee whether I pass the night within or without the house?' The stranger replied, 'Think not that I am unacquainted with the cause of thy sorrow and watchfulness, of thy solitary reflections in the open air: assuredly do I know who thou art, why thou art pensive, and the evils which thou darest at hand. Now, tell me, what recompense wouldst thou bestow on him, whoever he may be, who should relieve thee from thine anguish, and persuade Redwald neither to do thee evil himself, nor deliver thee to the swords of thine enemies.' When Edwin replied that he would show all the gratitude he could, would give all he possessed to the author of such a benefit, the stranger proceeded: 'Suppose that he should likewise promise thee, not only the destruction of thine enemies, but the royal dignity, so that thou shouldst excel in power not only all thy predecessors, but all the kings of England?' And Edwin, roused by the interrogation, did not fail to promise, that to the bestower of such great things he would reply by all possible gratitude. A third time the stranger demanded, 'If the procurer of so many and such great benefits should truly foretell what is to come, and should give thee, to ensure thy safety and life, such counsel as none of thy friends or kindred have ever heard, wouldst thou follow it, dost thou promise to receive his salutary admonitions?' And Edwin made haste to promise, that he who rescued him from such calamities, and who raised him to the throne, should in all things be his guide. Hearing this reply, the stranger placing his right hand on Edwin's head, added, 'When thou shalt witness the same sign, — the same impo-

sition of hands on thine head,—remember the present time, the conversation we have just held, and be prepared to fulfil the engagement thou hast made.’ And, having thus spoken, the stranger is said to have vanished, that Edwin might perceive he had been conversing, not with a man, but with a spirit. And as the royal youth thus sat, he felt comforted; and while he was anxiously pondering who and whence the person could be with whom he had been speaking, his friend, before mentioned, again approached him, and, accosting him with a cheerful countenance, said, ‘Rise! enter! dismiss thine anxiety, and resign both body and mind to repose; for the heart of the king is changed; he will do thee no harm, but rather fulfil the pledge he gave thee. Having formed the intention, as I told thee, of complying with ‘the demand of Edilfrid, he privately mentioned the matter to the queen, who diverted him from it, by showing how little it became such a king to betray for gold an unfortunate friend, and to sacrifice his faith, which ought to be dearer than all the gold, or all the precious ornaments in the universe.’ The king redeemed his pledge; raised an army to oppose Edilfrid, who invaded his dominions; defeated that powerful prince, who fell in the battle,—an event which opened to Edwin the throne of Northumbria. Thus, in a few months, this persecuted exile, whose life was hunted from one province to another, was elevated from a state in which existence was a burden, to the most powerful throne of the Saxons.” *

Edwin, like all the rest of his race, and all his coun- 626
trymen, was a pagan when thus singularly called to his high destiny. But misfortune had sobered him. He was by far the most contemplative and rational of all the English princes. In the ninth year of his reign he solicited the hand of Ethelberga, daughter of Ethelbert, king of Kent; but her brother Eadbald, who then reigned, was at first averse to the marriage of a Christian maiden with a pagan prince: nor would he give his consent unto the union, until not only her religious liberty had been guaranteed, but Edwin himself had promised to apply his most favourable consideration to the new faith, and to embrace it if it commanded his con-

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. ii. cap. 12. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*; et Fleury, *Histoire Ecclésiastique* (sub annis). Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonice*, tom. ii. p. 204. Surius, *De probatis Vitis Sanctorum*, vol. iv. p. 144. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die x. Octobris.

viction. Accompanied to the court of Edwin by bishop Paulinus, her confessor, and by other ecclesiastics, the new queen exerted all her influence to secure the conversion of her husband and his people; yet the one was very slow to embrace a religion which his reason did not yet fully appreciate; the others were obstinately attached to the superstitions of Odin. But there was in progress a train of events calculated to deepen the salutary impressions of the king. His superiority over Wessex — whether in virtue of a compact, or of his dignity as *bretwalda**, is uncertain — was borne with pain by the two conjoint sovereigns of that state; of whom one, named Cuichelm, despatched an assassin, with a poisoned dagger, to deprive him of empire and of life. In quality of envoy, the assassin demanded an audience; and, while delivering, in due formality, a pretended message from his master, he suddenly drew the dagger from beneath his vestments, and rushed on the king. The result would have been fatal to Edwin, had not one of the thanes, with an heroic self-devotion, and an instinctive presence of mind, which have scarcely a parallel in history, instantly stepped before his beloved master, and received the blow in his own body. So vigorous was the thrust, that it reached the king through the body of Lilla: nor was the assassin overpowered before he had sacrificed another thane. That very night Ethelberga was safely delivered of a daughter, — a circumstance which naturally added to the joy of the husband. Paulinus did not fail to improve the seasonable impression: he represented both his own escape and that of his consort as manifest acts of God's mercy; and so well did he reason, that the king consented that his new born daughter should be baptized, and promised, like Clovis of France, that if he were victorious in the war which he was about to undertake against the king of Wessex, he too would approach the font of regeneration. The expedition was successful: yet, though he forsook the worship of his pagan deities, he did not immediately

* See page 10. of the present volume.

embrace the faith of Christ. He was, in fact, too honest to profess what his understanding did not fully comprehend, even though his heart strongly disposed him to the change. He was often seen in meditation, anxiously revolving the arguments which Paulinus had advanced. A letter from the pope (Boniface V.) had also considerable effect. But that which above all other things decided his conviction, is the most remarkable part of the relation. As he was one day pursuing his meditations, Paulinus, says Bede, entered his apartment, approached him with much dignity, laid his right hand on his head, and asked him if he remembered that sign, and the engagement which it betokened. The remembrance of the nocturnal stranger at the court of Redwald rushed on the memory of the king, who attempted to fall at the bishop's feet; but Paulinus raised him, and said,—“Through the help of God thou hast escaped from the hands of thine enemies; through him, in the second place, thou hast obtained the promised kingdom. Now remember thy third promise, that thou wouldst receive the faith, and obey the precepts of Him who, delivering thee from thy worldly troubles, has also elevated thee to regal power. Obey his will, which he communicates through me, and he will also deliver thee from the everlasting torments of the wicked, and make thee a partaker with him of his heavenly glory!” It is almost needless to add, that Edwin proceeded to the immediate fulfilment of his promise.*

On this, as on the miracle ascribed to St. Lawrence, 626. there is, of necessity, much diversity of opinion. That the first appearance was miraculous, is affirmed by Bede and his followers; that there was no miracle in the case, is the natural opinion of modern writers. The chief consideration regards the testimony of the venerable historian. Of his general credulity, there is evidence enough; but, in this instance, there seems to be more of

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. ii. (variis capitulis). Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Sax. (sub annis)*. Surius, *De probatis Vitis Sanctorum*; et Bollandistæ, *Acta SS., die x. Octob.*

method, more of a natural connection in its parts, more appearance of probability, than in almost any other of his relations. As a Northumbrian, too, he may reasonably be supposed to have been much better acquainted with the events of that province, than with those of the southern kingdoms. That the relation, in its more prominent parts, bears the impress of truth, may readily be conceded. But we must not forget that Bede records the tradition just as he found it — just as it was received by all men in his time. His was certainly not a mind to weigh evidence: wherever there were two modes of solving a mystery, — the miraculous and the natural, — his piety always impelled him to adopt the former. In the present case, what natural solution can be given? That of a numerous party, as embodied by the industrious historian of the Anglo-Saxons, has the most special claim on our attention.

“Edwin remained sitting before the palace, reflecting on his misfortunes and darkening prospects. In this anxious state night approached* ; and he believed he saw an unknown person advance to him, who promised him present deliverance and great future prosperity, if he should listen to what would be afterwards taught him. The vision laid his hand on his head, and, adjuring him to remember this interview, disappeared.” — “In this juncture, Paulinus appears to have come to the knowledge of the king’s dream at the court of Redwald ; and he made an ingenious use of it. Without appearing to have had any previous knowledge of this dream, he one day entered the king’s apartment, as he was pursuing his meditations on the opposing religions, and, advancing with a solemn air, imitated the action of the imaginary figure, and placed his right hand on his sovereign’s head, at the same time asking him if he remembered that sign. The king’s sensibility was instantly affected. His dream and promise rushed upon his mind. He did not pause to consider that Paulinus might, from his queen or his intimate friends, have become acquainted with his own account of his believed vision : all seemed supernatural, and Paulinus to be the actual vision that had addressed him.”

* Mr. Turner must mean midnight, for Edwin was retiring to rest when first called out by his friend ; and a long time had elapsed after the departure of that friend before the vision appeared. “Cumque diu, tacitis mentis angoribus, vidit intempestæ noctis silentio.” — *Bede*, ii. 12.

All this is characteristic enough of the historian. Where the conduct of a Romish ecclesiastic admits of two modes of solution, Mr. Turner is almost sure to adopt that which is the less honourable alike to religion and to human nature. We are surprised, however, at the extreme gentleness of his language. The "simple contrivance" of Lawrence, and "the ingenious use" made by Paulinus, *we* should be inclined to stigmatise as acts of gross imposture — of spiritual knavery, totally incompatible with the possession of good principle. To repeat our own words on the preceding occasion, we will not thus judge of holy men. If these transactions ever happened at all, — if Bede was not here, as in some other cases, misled by a distorted tradition, the most rational hypothesis is, that which would take the appearance at the court of Redwald to be, not a reality, but a dream — yet a dream sent from heaven. How Paulinus came by the knowledge of that dream, how he conceived himself commissioned to promote, in this case, the secret purpose of the Most High, — whether by another dream, or inspiration, — is no concern of ours. Whatever may be the opinion of modern scepticism, the Christian philosopher may believe that, in the time of the Saxons, as in times still more ancient, — now, as six thousand years ago, — God has a way of communicating his will, though that way be inscrutable to the senses.*

But Edwin had no intention of entering the baptismal font alone: perhaps he did not wish to bear the undivided responsibility of the change on which he had resolved. He convoked his witan, to consult with it on the relative merits of the two religions, and separately desired each member openly to declare his opinion on the subject. The first and most influential dignitary of that assembly, Coifi, the high-priest of Odin, was also the first to reply. To the surprise of all present, he declared his deliberate conviction, that the religion they had hitherto professed was worth absolutely no-

626
to
634.

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i chap. 7. Alfordus, Annales, ubi suprâ.

thing ; that it neither inspired virtue, nor conferred utility : that their gods were utterly powerless. The reasoning by which he had arrived at this conclusion, however it might evince his natural shrewdness, does not argue much for the profundity of his theological knowledge. Nobody, he observed, had worshipped their deities with so much devotion as himself ; yet many men had prospered much more in their worldly concerns. Had they possessed any power, any value, would they have suffered him to remain unrewarded ? He concluded by earnestly exhorting king and thanes to try this new religion, since any was better than the one they had so long followed.* The reply of another thane demonstrates a more philosophic mind, and has the additional merit of graphically describing the manners of the times.

“ The present life of man, O king, when compared with the uncertain life to come, to me resembles a scene at one of your wintry feasts. While seated at supper with your generals and ministers, the fire blazing in the hearth, and the whole hall cheered by the warmth from the centre ; while the wintry winds, while storms of rain or snow, rage without, a little sparrow enters at one door, flies swiftly through the hall, and disappears at another portal. Within, it feels not the tempest ; but, that little space of time having elapsed, passing from one winter to another, — from darkness to darkness, — it disappears from our eyes. Such is the brief life of man : what may follow it, what preceded it, are wrapt in mystery. Wherefore, if this new doctrine give us any certain information on this subject, it deserves to be received.” †

* See Vol. II. p. 214. That human prosperity should be regarded by heathens as the least proof of God's favour, will scarcely surprise us, when we consider that this same error was once committed by the Jews.

† We give Bede's original of this interesting speech : —

“ Talis, inquit, mihi videtur, rex, vita hominum præsens in terris, ad comparationem ejus quod nobis incertum est temporis, quale cum te residente ad cœnam cum ducibus ac primatis tuis tempore brumali, accenso quidem foco in medio, et calido effecto cœnaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnia turbinibus hiemalium pluviarum vel nivium, adveniensque unus passerum, domum citissimè pervolaverit, qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens, mox per aliud exierit : ipso quidem tempore quo intus est hiems tempestate non tangitur, tamen parvissimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excursu, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens, tuis oculis elabitur. Ita hæc vita hominum ad modicum apparet, quid autem sequatur, quidve præcesserit, prorsus ignoramus. Unde si hæc nova doctrina certius aliquid attulit, merito esse sequenda videtur.” — *Bede*, lib. ii. cap. 12.

Coifi now desired Paulinus to be introduced to the witan, to explain the evidences and nature of Christianity. When the bishop had finished, he still more strongly delivered his conviction of the utter folly of paganism, and of the superior excellency of the faith of Christ ; that the one was dark and false, the other bright and cheering from its bringing a blessed immortality to light. That these sentiments sprang from his heart, he abundantly proved. He exhorted the king to destroy the altars and temples which they had so foolishly venerated. When asked who wou'd be the first to profane them, he boldly replied, — “ I will ! who more fit to set the example of the destruction than myself ? In my folly I have worshipped them ; in the wisdom received from the true God, I will profane them.” Discarding with contempt his priestly vestments, he called for horse, sword, and spear, — another proof of his sincerity, as by the pagan laws no priest was to touch armour, or to ride on any other beast than a mare. Girding on the sword, mounting the horse, and grasping the spear in his right hand, Coifi, to the utter amazement of the multitude, who thought him mad, hastened to the nearest temple, and with a loud voice defying the gods of his fathers, hurled his spear against the sacred edifice : it stuck in the wall. To the surprise of the bystanders, the heavens were silent, and the daring profaner remained unscathed and exulting. With alacrity they now obeyed his orders, by setting fire to the place, and cutting down the consecrated groves. Edwin, his chief nobility, and many of his people, were solemnly baptized in the year 627. To advance the success of Christianity, Paulinus was established in the archiepiscopal see of York. During six years this excellent prelate indefatigably laboured in his vocation : both in Bernicia and Deira he baptized thousands ; his mansions at Yeverin in Glendale, and at Catterick in Yorkshire, were long revered by posterity, as the places where their fathers had been taught the blessings of religion. Unto his death, Edwin proved the sin-

cerity of his conversion. Though offered, on the death of Redwald, the crown of East Anglia, he procured it for his benefactor's son, Eorpwald, whom he persuaded to embrace Christianity. Eorpwald, however, was soon slain in battle; but the interests of the new religion were confided to a still more zealous convert—Sigebert, his brother, who, aided by a Gallic bishop, established it in that province. But calamities were permitted to befall the infant church, both in Northumbria and East Anglia. In the sixth year after his conversion, Edwin was defeated and slain in a battle with Penda of Mercia, the most savage and formidable of all the pagan sovereigns of England. This catastrophe arrested the progress of the faith; and, to add to the grief of the new converts, the same ferocious king turned his arms against East Anglia. Sigebert had retired to a monastery, after resigning the sceptre to his cousin Egeric. To oppose the invasion, Sigebert was persuaded to leave his cell; but rejecting the use of a sword, as inconsistent with his monastic profession, he directed the troops with a wand. The fortune of Penda again prevailed: the East Angles were defeated; and both Sigebert and Egeric were left among the slain. As all Northumbria was ravaged by the pagans, who put every Christian to the sword, Paulinus, with Ethelberga, the widowed queen of Edwin, and their infant children, hastily returned to Kent, and all were welcomed by king Eadbald.*

- 654 On the death of Edwin, Bernicia and Deira again
to obeyed separate princes, and both for a moment restored
688. paganism. In a few months, however, the two princes
fell, the one in battle against Cadwalla, the British ally
of Penda; the other through treachery. But Oswald,
the brother and successor of Eanfred, on the throne of
Bernicia, resolved to restore both the independence of
his country and the religion of Christ. With a small

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. ii. cap. 13, 14, 15, 16, & 20.† Surius, *De probatis Vitis Sanctorum*, tom. iv. p. 144, &c. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die x. Octob. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonice*, necnon Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (sub annis).

but resolute band, he found the enemy negligently encamped in the neighbourhood of Hexham : but, ere the action commenced, he caused a rude wooden cross to be hastily constructed ; and, kneeling with his troops before it, all prayed for victory. The prayer was heard ; the British forces were defeated, their king slain on the field. This decisive victory was followed by the elevation of Oswald to the throne of all Northumbria — the southern, no less than the northern province, joyfully proclaiming him. To provide for the diffusion of Christianity, was one of his first cares. In his youth he had been an exile among the Picts ; he was attached to the religious church of the people ; and he applied for missionaries, not to Canterbury, but to the monastery of Iona, which had been founded about the middle of the sixth century by St. Columba, the great apostle of the nation. The rule professed by that monastery is unknown : notwithstanding the arguments of the Benedictines, it could not be of that order ; for not only did the monks differ from the Christians of the Continent about the time of celebrating Easter, the ecclesiastical tonsure, and other points of discipline ; but their abbot, who was always in priest's orders, consecrated, and was the recognised superior of, bishops. (Of this extraordinary fact, no other instance is to be found in all the ecclesiastical records of antiquity.) On the arrival of Oswald's application, Cormac, one of the monks, was consecrated for the mission. But Cormac made a short stay in Bernicia, which could not at that time, perhaps, boast of a single Christian : he had not patience to bear with the ignorance and violence of these pagans, and he returned to Iona in disgust. While relating to the assembled chapter the difficulties with which he had to contend, and dwelling on the utter hopelessness of making any impression on so barbarous a people, — " Brother," exclaimed a voice, " you seem to have been too severe with your untutored auditors, and to have lost sight of the apostolic injunction which commands us to feed little children with milk : by

degrees you might have nourished them with the stronger food of God's word, and raised their minds to comprehend and practise the more sublime precepts!" Every eye was instantly turned on the spectator, a private monk named Aidan, who was immediately chosen for the mission, consecrated, and despatched to the court of Oswald. His arrival was hailed with joy by the king, who permitted him to fix the metropolis of his see wherever he pleased. Whether it was to escape the frequent invasions of the pagan Saxons, or from a love for solitude, or from a tender recollection of Iona, he made choice of Lindisfarne; and thus became the founder of that see, which subsisted under sixteen bishops, from St. Aidan to Eardulf (viz. from 635 to 895), when the descents of an enemy more to be dreaded than even the Saxons, — the pagan Danes, — forced the bishop and his monks to abandon the island, and, in a few years, to fix their abode at Chester-le-Street. In his efforts to convert the Northumbrians, St. Aidan was powerfully assisted by the king, who translated his discourses into the language of the people, and explained with exemplary patience the leading doctrines of the Gospel. The virtues of Aidan, the zeal of the king, had their due effect: converts were multiplied; in a few years many churches and a few monasteries arose, and the new faith was so deeply rooted as to bid defiance to future assaults. The conduct, indeed, of the two saints, — for Oswald has also been invested with the honours of canonisation, — was eminently calculated to make a salutary impression, and is described in glowing colours by the pen of the venerable Bede. "St. Aidan," says that historian, "above all recommended his doctrine in this point, — he lived exactly as he preached: he sought nothing, he loved nothing belonging to this world. All the gifts which he received from kings and nobles, he rejoiced in giving immediately to the poor. To journey from town to town, from valley to valley, not on horseback, but on foot (unless necessity demanded otherwise), was his constant

course of life. When in his journeys he perceived a number of men, whether rich or poor, he instantly turned aside towards them, — if infidels, to instruct and baptize them ; if believers, to comfort them in the faith, to excite them to deeds of mercy, and to Christian virtues. His life casts deep reproach on our indifference ; all his attendants, whether clerical or lay, were constrained to read and meditate, either in the psalms, or in some other edifying book. 'This was his daily occupation, and that of all his companions, wherever they might be.' Such a man was not likely to be much at the king's table, even though that king was St. Oswald, or his successor St. Oswin. He was seldom there, says Bede, and when he did go, he was accompanied by one or two priests only ; and having finished a hasty repast, they returned to their meditation, singing a prayer. He fasted to the ninth hour of the day* ; he never spared a rich or powerful offender ; and the money he received from them he employed either in the relief of the poor, or in the redemption of captives. In this, as in many other respects, St. Oswald appears to have successfully imitated him. One Easter festival, both bishop and king being seated at the table, there arrived a multitude of poor from other parts ; Oswald ordered not only the yet untasted viands, but a silver dish then before him, to be broken to pieces, and the fragments to be distributed among them. Before his death, Oswald had the gratification to assist in the introduction of Christianity into Wessex, — the fourth Saxon kingdom which received it. Birinus, the apostle of that state, who had been despatched by the pope to labour in the wide field, had just opened his mission, when Oswald arrived at the court of Cynegils, to demand the daughter of that monarch in marriage. His influence procured the missionary a favourable reception ; Cynegils and his daughter embraced Christianity ; and their example was followed by multitudes of their subjects. But his virtues could not preserve St. Oswald from defeat and

* Three o'clock, P. M.

death at the hands of Penda, the ferocious pagan king of Mercia.* St. Oswin, king of Deira, who endeavoured to imitate the example of Oswald, also perished by violence, and his tragical fate hastened the death of his friend St. Aidan. Christianity, however, was too firmly established in this kingdom to be shaken by these accidents. It was soon to be established, even in the dominions of Penda, whose sword was dyed with the blood of four Anglo-Saxon kings. Peada, the son of Penda, solicited the hand of Alchflæda, daughter of Oswy, the successor of St. Oswin : the princess spurned the embraces of a pagan ; Peada consented to be baptized, and introduced four missionaries into Mercia. Though Penda refused to forsake the religion of his fathers, he offered no obstacle to the conversion of his son or that of his subjects. But this connection did not prevent Penda from again invading Northumbria : this time, however, fortune forsook him ; he was defeated and slain by Oswy. Oswy, who died in 670, had the satisfaction to see the true faith restored in Essex, — an event which he assisted to hasten. — One kingdom only was now pagan, that of Sussex, — the smallest and most barbarous of the Saxon states. Its conversion was reserved for the zeal of St. Wilfrid, the celebrated Northumbrian prelate. By Edilwalch the king, who had received baptism, the enterprising missionary was invited to labour in the field ; and the Isle of Selsey, with 250 slaves, was bestowed on him by the munificence of Edilwalch. These slaves he sedulously instructed in the doctrines and duties of Christianity ; and on the day of their baptism, he surprised both them and the whole nation by admitting them to civil freedom : *they*, he declared, ought to be no longer bondsmen,

* We do not notice the miracles recorded of St. Oswald by the credulous Bede, the heads of whose chapters are sufficiently repulsive : — “ Cap. ix. *Ut in loco in quo occisus est rex Oswaldus, crebra sanitatum miracula facta.*” “ Cap. x. *Ut pulvis loci illius contra ignem valuerit.*” “ Cap. xi. *Ut super reliquias ejus lux collectis tota nocte steterit.*” “ Cap. xii. *Ut ad tumulum ejus sit parvulus in febre curatus.*” “ Cap. xiii. *Ut in Hibernia quidem per reliquias ejus à mortis articulo revocatus.*” As Bede was incapable of fraud, they may all be safely assigned to the credulity of a dark age.

who were co-heirs with himself of the kingdom of heaven. Thus the conversion of all the Anglo-Saxon nations was effected in about ninety years, viz. from 597 to 688. Its greatest praise is, that it was effected without bloodshed. The pagan kings did not put to death their Christian subjects; the converted monarchs were equally clement towards those who remained pagans. The church, indeed, had its martyrs; but these perished in battle against the ferocious Penda, who appears to have been influenced alike by ambition and religious hatred. Much of this success was, doubtless, owing to the policy of the missionaries, in aiming at the conversion of the rulers before that of the people. The example of the monarch constrained that of his subjects; under his protection the missionaries could labour without fear; their own superior refinement, and the estimation in which religion was held by the great European powers, were considerations no less weighty. With religion they introduced civilisation; they taught the useful arts of life; they probably introduced those of letters, certainly that of written laws, since it was through their persuasion, that Ethelbert of Kent enacted those which bear his name.* In every point of view the change they effected was beneficial: their virtues won the love, their talents commanded the respect, of the barbarians. It has, indeed, been contended, that they corrupted the ancient religion of the island, as professed by the British prelates. But for such a charge there is not the slightest ground in the oldest authorities: on the contrary, from the unquestionable testimony of Gildas, Bede, and Nennius, in regard to the deplorable ignorance and worse morals of the Britons, we should infer that their faith was on a par with both. Where the stream was so corrupt, the fountain could scarcely be pure.†

! * See before, page 64.

† Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. iiii. Vita S. Oswaldi (apud Bollandistas, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Augusti v.). Vita S. Aidani (apud eundem, die xxxi. Aug.). Capgravius, *Novæ Legendæ Sanctorum*, fol. 1—6. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (necnon Alfordus, *Annales*

600

to

650.

The saints of the Anglo-Saxon period are exceedingly numerous — more numerous than those of any other country, with the single exception of Gaul. This fact may be explained by the eagerness with which a newly converted people fulfil the duties of religion, by the fervour of a first zeal, by the absence of wealth and power, — the ordinary inducements to ecclesiastics during the prosperity of the church. Of these saints the most ancient is *Fursi*, a native of the sister island. The time of his birth is unknown, but we may conjecture it to have been about the commencement of the seventh century. In the encomiastic language of his earliest biographer (who is followed by Bede), his infancy was distinguished not only for every virtue, but for every quality of mind and of body. In fact, he is represented as in an especial degree the favourite of heaven: witness the visions with which from time to time his faith was strengthened, his zeal was quickened. Of these the most remarkable was one which he had while journeying from his monastery to his father's home, where he hoped to gain relief from a disorder — the effect probably of his austerities — that had seriously assailed him. On his way, while leaning on the arm of a companion, and occupied in the vesper service, his feet suddenly refused to perform their duty; he stood like one deprived of life, and was with difficulty carried into the nearest house, where from vespers to primes he lay entranced, surrounded by his afflicted friends. The account which on his revival he gave of this trance, created great sensation in the ecclesiastics of the age.

“ And though he perceived that he was surrounded by thick darkness, he yet could see four hands above him holding him by the arms, and that he was borne along by beings with snow-white wings: the hands which thus sustained him on each side were under the wings; and he could distinguish, amidst the gloom, bodies resembling the angelic. Ascending higher, he

perceived that the faces of the angels shone with dazzling lustre, — or rather, he perceived the exceeding brightness emitted by the angelic looks — for such was its effulgence, that he could not distinguish any corporeal figure. And he beheld a third glorious angel, armed with a white shield and burning sword, preceding him. These three inhabitants of heaven shining with equal splendour, filled his soul with the sweetest pleasure by the sound of their wings, the melody of their voices, and their seraphic countenances. For they sung, one commencing, the two others joining him. — *Ibunt sancti de virtute in virtutem, videbitur Deus decorum in Sion!** and there was due modulation in the song. He heard also another chaunt, apparently by many thousands of angels; but it was unknown to him; and he could with difficulty catch these words, — ‘*Exierunt autem obviam Christo.*’ The faces of all the more distant angels, as far as he could distinguish them, seemed to be like those of his attendants; yet, on account of the overwhelming effulgence, he could not clearly discern the lineaments or form of any thing visible. Then one of the celestial hosts commanded the foremost armed angels to lead back the spirit to its body, and end the solicitude felt on his account. Immediately the obedient angels returned by the path which had brought them.”

St. Fursi was in no haste to rejoin his earthly companions, but being assured that he should again be visited by his celestial friends, he felt somewhat comforted. At cock-crowing, great was the surprise, no less than the joy, of the people round his body, who, in the true Irish fashion, appear to have been *waking* him, to see him calmly open his eyes, and to hear him enquire the reason of their loud lamentations. His first care was to take the holy communion of our *Lord's body and blood*†, that he might be the better prepared when the angels next visited him. They did not long delay.

“ In the middle of the night, at the third feria, this illustrious man being visited by many kinsmen, friends, and neighbours, the darkness came upon him, and his feet stiffened. While stretching out his hands in prayer, he joyfully received his deathlike trance. He recognised, by the same signs as before, the approach of his vision: reclined on his couch, as if over-

* Of course the angels must use the Latin version.

† *Sacri corporis et sanguinis communionem.*

whelmed by sleep, he heard the horrible cries of a multitude celebrating his departure. On opening his eyes, however, he perceived only the three angels before-mentioned, — on each side of him a third, armed, standing on his hand. Wonderful was the manner in which, deprived of human organs, he saw these holy angels, and heard the surpassing sweetness of their songs. The angel on his right hand consoled him, saying, — ‘Fear not! thou shalt not want a defence!’ Being borne on high by the angels, without impediment from the house or its roof, while passing through the howls of surrounding demons he heard the voice of one exhorting the rest to hasten before and to oppose him. And he saw a black cloud proceeding from the left, and occupying the space in front of him, and exhibiting the shadows of hostile ranks. As far as he could observe the figures of the enemies, they were hideous, dark, their necks outstretched, their appearance squalid and horrible, their heads swollen to the size of a fish-kettle. As they flew about, or obstructed the way, he could see nothing of a bodily form, nothing beyond a horrible, fleeting shadow. But what enlightened reader is ignorant that these shades of unclean spirits, undefined as they are, are sufficient to terrify the soul? So the hostile demons threw flaming darts at them; but on the angelic shield all were speedily extinguished. And before the sight of this warlike angel, the enemies fell back: and he reasoned with them, saying, — ‘Impede not our way, for this man is not to share your perdition!’ But one of the blaspheming crew contradicted the angel, by exclaiming that God would be unjust, if he did not condemn the man who consented to sin, since the Scripture saith, that not only they who commit it, but they who have pleasure in sinners, deserve death. And as the angel fought, the holy man thought that the noise of the contention, no less than the vociferations of the demons, might be heard by the whole earth. Then the conquered Satan, like a bruised snake, slowly raising his venomous head, cried, — ‘Often hath this one uttered idle words; and he does not deserve to enjoy the happy life!’ The angel replied, — ‘If thou canst not charge him with great crimes, he must not perish for the least.’ The old enemy proceeded: ‘Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.’ The angel enquired, — ‘When did he seek revenge, or injure any one?’ Said the devil, — ‘That is not the meaning of Scripture, which does not merely command men not to pursue revenge, but also to dismiss all ill-feeling from the heart.’ The holy angel excused him by saying, — ‘Though he was influenced by evil custom, yet he had mercy in his heart.’ The devil rejoined, — ‘As he did evil through custom, he shall be

punished by the Supreme Judge.' Replied the holy one, — 'We shall judge him in the presence of God.' Then the thrice subdued enemy, renewing his serpent venom, said, — 'It is written, *Unless ye are converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven* : — hath he fulfilled this injunction?' The angel replied, — 'We shall judge him in the presence of the Lord!' And the angel fought and subdued them. Then the angel at his right hand said, — 'Cast thine eyes upon the earth!' And the man of God looking down, saw a dark valley far below him; and beheld four fires in the air, equally distant from each other. 'What are these fires?' demanded the angel. 'I know not,' replied the man of God. The angel added, — 'These four fires are they which consume the world, after the forgiveness of sins and the renouncing of the devil and his works, both by baptism and confession. The first, the fire of lying, is, that men, who promised in baptism to renounce the devil and all his works, do not fulfil the engagement. The second is that of avarice; when the riches of the world are preferred to the love of God. The third is that of dissension; when men do not hesitate to offend, even in things indifferent, the souls of their neighbours. The fourth is that of impiety; when the powerful despoil or defraud the weak without compunction.' During all this time the four fires united, so as to become one great fiery globe, and it approached him. And he was afraid, saying to the angel, — 'The fire draws near me!' And the angel replied, — 'What thou hast not kindled, will not burn in thee; though this fire be great and terrible, yet it proves every man according to his works, since the lusts of every one will burn in it; for, as the body burns with forbidden desires, so shall the soul burn in just punishment.' Then saw he the holy angel meet the flaming fire, and divide it into two parts, like a wall on each side of him; and on each side stood a holy angel to defend him from it. And he perceived four unclean spirits hovering in the fire, in which they waged a horrible war: one of them cried, — 'The servant, who knoweth his master's will, yet doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.' The angel demanded, — 'In what hath this man not fulfilled the pleasure of his Lord?' The devil replied, — 'In that he received the gifts of the ungodly.' Said the other, — 'But he believed that each of the givers had done penance.' — Satan: 'But he should first have proved the constancy of their repentance, — whether it brought forth fruit. For gifts blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.' Replied the holy one, — 'We will judge him in the presence of God!' And the false devil began to blaspheme against his Maker, saying, — 'Hitherto we have

believed God to be true.' The other demanded, — 'How then do you consider him otherwise?' The obstinate demon returned, — 'Because every crime which is not purged upon earth, must, according to Esaias the prophet, be punished in heaven. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land : but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.** This man has not purged his crimes on earth ; nor there hath he received their punishment. Where then is God's justice?' The holy angel rebuking them, said, — 'Blaspheme not, ye who are ignorant of God's secret judgment !' — The devil : 'What is there hidden in this case?' — Angel : 'So long as repentance may be expected, the divine mercy accompanies man.' — Satan : 'But there is no repentance in these regions.' — Angel : 'Perhaps there may be, — ye know not the mysterious councils of God.' — Devil : 'Let us depart, for there is no justice here.' But another of the host observed : 'There still remains the straight gate, at which so few enter, and now we shall have him. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*' † — Angel : 'This man did good to his neighbours.' — Devil : 'To do them good, unless he also loved them, will not suffice.' — Angel : 'The fruit of love is good works : God will render to every man according to his works.' — Devil : 'But as this one hath not fulfilled God's command by love, he must be damned.' Yet the holy angels were victorious over these wicked demons. Being six times conquered, the devil again blasphemed : 'Unless God be unjust ; if he be displeased with lying, or disobedience to his word, this man cannot possibly escape. He promised to renounce the world, yet hath he loved it, despite the apostolic injunction, — *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world.‡* On this man, neither his own baptismal vow, nor the apostolic prohibition had any effect.' — Angel : 'He loved the things of this world, not for himself, but for the sake of others, to whom he dispensed them.' — Devil : 'No matter ; he *did* love them, and that contrary to God's command, and to his own baptismal engagement.' Though again conquered, the devil reverted to his cunning accusations : 'It is written §, — *When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die ; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life ; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand.* Now, this man did not announce to the wicked the punishment which awaited them. — Angel : 'Even here it is written, *Therefore the prudent shall*

* Isaiah, v. 19, 20.

† 1 John, ii. 15.

‡ Matthew, xxii. 39.

§ Ezekiel, iii. 18.

*keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time.** For when the hearers despise the word, even the tongue of the doctor is dumb.' — Devil: 'Yet should he preach even unto death; he should neither consent to evil, nor be silent.' During all this controversy, the battle was stoutly maintained, until the judgment of God decreed the triumph to the angel; until, the enemies being crushed and silenced, the holy man was surrounded by exceeding glory, and by angelic choirs, singing, — '*No labour should appear too much, nor time too long, by which eternal glory can be obtained!*' He was filled at once with joy and sweetness. Then looking up, he perceived a long line of angels and just men shining with ineffable glory, flying, surrounding him with their dazzling wings, driving far from him the confusion and the dread alike of the fire and of the demons."

In this vision, St. Fursi saw not only innumerable hosts of angels, but two Irish priests of his own province; and from these he received much godly advice as to his future conduct. They exhorted him to preach repentance to the people; to inveigh with holy zeal against prevailing vices; to denounce on the wicked the judgments to come; to fear neither high nor low; to be unwearied in exhorting all men to flee from the wrath of God. Above all, he was enjoined to threaten the doctors and princes of the church, since they suffered the souls of the faithful to perish through lack of admonition:—"God is angry with the doctors of the church, in that they neglect the holy Scriptures, and are willingly engrossed by the cares of life. Both king and priest do what seemeth good in their own eyes. The cause and root of all these evils is pride; through it the people rise against their king, the minor clergy against their priest, the monks against their abbot, children against their parents, the young against the old." We have, however, no room for the long sermon with which St. Fursi was regaled by the two Irish priests: it was by no means favourable to the morality or religion of the age; it was severe alike on clergy and laity, and it argues a degree of corruption in the people which we are apt to overlook in the burning sanctity of a few saints. To reclaim them from the worst vices,

* Amos, v. 13.

and to avert from them the destruction which impended over them, St. Fursi was now brought back to earth. His return, however, was as perilous as before : he was met by the huge fire, which, though divided by the preceding angel, did not wholly leave him scatheless : though there was one angel on his right, another on his left, something leaped from the fire, and fairly lighted on his shoulders. This was not a demon, but a man pitched upon his back by demons,—one whom he had known, and who in dying had left him his wardrobe. Hence his crime : he had received a present from a sinner—from a soul about to be lost : hence both shoulders and cheek were scorched, before one of the angels could throw the unwelcome visiter back into the fire. “ Do not reject him,” said a scoffing devil, “ whom thou once receivedest : thou hast shared in his substance, and thou shouldst also share in his punishment !” The angel excused him while the devil was present ; but afterwards told him that there was much justice in the infernal accusation, for if he had not received the presents of the condemned soul, if he himself had not lighted the fire, he would not now be burnt by it. Having returned to his body, and entered it at an opening in the breast, his first care was to burn the garments which he had received from the lost one ; but nothing could remove the mark left by the fire on his shoulders and cheek ;—“ *Mirumque in modum,*” says his biographer, “ *quod animus sola sustinuit, in carne demonstrabatur.*” This sign served him as an indisputable memorial of the mission for which he was destined,—the preaching of repentance to mankind. Ten years did he labour in his own country, which he constantly traversed from see to see, followed or met by multitudes of hearers. At the end of this period he sailed to England, and was eagerly received by Sigebert, king of the East Angles, whom he assisted in the conversion of the people. Here he founded the noble monastery of Cnobbersberg, in which the sainted king afterwards assumed the cowl. From

this retreat, however, as we have before related, the royal monk was summoned to oppose the invasion of Penda: in the battle which followed, he used a wand, not a sword; and fell with most of his army, his successor Egeric sharing the common fate. It was probably on this occasion—though his biographer makes him remain until the reign of Anna—that St. Fursi resigned the care of his monastery, and sailed for France, to continue his mission. His last foundation was the monastery of Latiniacum, or Lagny-on-the-Marne, a few leagues from Paris, where about the middle of the seventh century he breathed his last. Such in substance is the romantic legend of St. Fursi, written by one nearly contemporary with him,—a legend which evidently served as an authority to the venerable Bede, who often copies its very words. When divested of its accidental appendages, there is, perhaps, nothing improbable in it. A mind naturally enthusiastic, if deeply impressed with the concerns of a future world, and pervaded with the credulity of the age,—with a belief that for every human soul there is a perpetual struggle between the powers of light and those of darkness,—would inevitably be imaginative. Fursi might have trances: it is more probable that he dreamed; nor can we wonder, that the subject of his visions was that of his waking hours. His rhetorical biographer, however, has evidently added so much to his original relation, that we cannot separate the two. Such visions were common in this age. Such was that of St. Anscar*; such were those of other saints, whose acts are to be found in the interminable collections of Surius, Mabillon, and the Bollandists. Probably, too, the far-famed legend relating to the cave of St. Patrick, which has acquired additional celebrity by the genius of Calderon, originated in a dream.†

* See Vol. II. p. 208.

† Anon. Vita S. Fursi (apud Mabillon, Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. tom. ii. p. 299.); neonon (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, die Januarii, xvi.). Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. iii. cap. 19. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Ang. Sax. tom. ii. A.D. 637—642. Centuriæ Magdeburgenses, c. vii. fol. 510

672. Of *St. Ceadda* or *Chad*, the celebrated bishop of Lichfield, we have a meagre, and, as usual, a legendary account, by the venerable Bede. He must not be confounded with his brother *St. Cedda*, apostle of the East Saxons, and bishop of London.* During the absence of *St. Wilfrid* in France, *St. Chad*, then abbot of *Les-tingham*, was called by king *Oswy* to the see of *York*, which he held three years. By *Theodore*, however, the successor of *Deusdedit*, he was deposed, first, because he had not been consecrated by any prelate in communion with Rome, and secondly, perhaps, because his elevation was a positive injury to *St. Wilfrid*. The readiness with which he resigned the archiepiscopal mitre, the humility with which he retired to his monastery, made a favourable impression on both *Theodore* and *Wilfrid*. At this moment *Jaruman*, the fourth bishop of *Lichfield*, dying, *Wulphere* king of the *Mercians* applied to the primate for a new bishop, and *Chad* was placed in the vacant see. That he was worthy of the dignity he abundantly proved, by the zeal with which he laboured for the reformation of his flock. In about two years, however, he was summoned to his reward. Of course, no saint could be expected to die without a miracle. One day, while the bishop was alone in his oratory, and his monks (for most cathedrals of this period were served by monks), were at prayers in the church, *St. Owen*, who was in the next cell, suddenly heard the most ravishing music gradually descend from the heavens, light on the oratory, enter, and fill it with the most harmonious swell. This sweet melody having continued, as he thought, about half an hour, ascended whence it came. While ruminating in astonishment, the bishop opened the casement of the oratory, and with his hand, according to custom, gave a

Capgrave, *Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. 154. Father Alford is at some pains to establish the truth of this legend, by representing the vision of *St. Fursi*, not as a dream, but as a real event. Calderon, *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* (in *Autos Sacramentales*).

* He had two other brothers in priest's orders. Four brothers, ecclesiastics, two of them bishops and saints, is, as Bede observes, an unusual circumstance.

signal, that whoever was waiting might enter. Owen entered, and was commanded to call the seven monks from the church, and to return with them. When assembled, after exhorting them to persevere in their duties, especially in the observance of their monastic rule, he told them that the day of his departure was at hand. Having received his blessing, they sorrowfully left him; but Owen soon returned, and kneeling at his feet, said, — “Father, may I ask thee a question?” “Ask,” replied the prelate. “Tell me, I beseech thee, who were the singers of that triumphant song which I heard descend on thine oratory, and afterwards ascend to heaven?” — “If thou hast heard that song,” said the bishop, “and hast recognised the approach of the celestial visitants, I enjoin thee in God’s name not to disclose the fact so long as I live. The singers were, indeed, angelic spirits who came to summon me to that heaven, which I have so long wished to behold, — to inform me that in seven days they will return for me.” On the seventh day, says the venerable historian, who professed to have derived the relation from one of the monks themselves, he died. — St. Chad appears to have dreaded the thunder, — not, doubtless, for his own sake, but because he regarded it as a token of God’s wrath with mankind. Even if a high wind rose, he suspended his reading or meditation, or whatever else he was doing, to entreat the divine mercy. If the wind were violent, he shut his book, fell on his face, and remained motionless in prayer. If a thunder storm raged, he hastened to the church, and continued at his devotions until the atmosphere recovered its serenity. He believed that, at such times, the arm of the Highest was stretched out to strike, and that prayer with vows of repentance could alone save the world.*

Of the four abbots of Wearmouth, whose lives form the most interesting portion of Bede’s works, — the most

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* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. iv. cap. 3. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum, die Martii*, ii. Alfordus, *Annales Eccles. Ang. Sax.* tom. ii. (sub annis). Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, i. 425.

interesting, because free from miracle and fable,— we can find room only for *St. Benedict Biscop*. This celebrated abbot, to whom England was more indebted than to any other ecclesiastic of his time, was probably born about the year 630. Though the minister and friend of king Oswy, a warm spirit of devotion led him to relinquish both his landed possessions and that prince's favour, and hasten to Rome. Having venerated the tombs of the apostles, and observed the state of the monastic institution in that city, he returned to England, where he lost no opportunity of impressing on the rulers of the church the adoption of whatever he deemed most worthy of imitation. In 665, he undertook a second journey to Rome, accompanied by prince Alchfrid (Alfred) son of Oswy, who was probably as much influenced by curiosity as religion. In a few months he left that city for the Lerin Isles, now isles of St. Margaret, on the coast of Provence. Here, in a Benedictine monastery, situated on the smaller island of St. Honoré, he received the tonsure, and embraced the religious life. Having passed two years in this retreat, he revisited the eternal city. By pope Vitalian, he was selected to be the interpreter and friend of the newly appointed primate of Canterbury, St. Theodore, whom he had wisely chosen to preside over the English church. On their arrival in Kent, Theodore placed him over the monastery of St. Peter, at Canterbury: in two years, however, he again revisited Rome, where he purchased or begged a considerable number of MSS., relics, and paintings. With these he returned to his native Northumbria, now subject to king Egfrid. By that monarch he was received with the attention due to his indefatigable labours, and to his extraordinary love of knowledge; and he was presented with as much land near the mouth of the Wear as would maintain seventy families. In the year 674, the monastery of Wearmouth rose from the banks of that river, to attest his zeal and the royal liberality. That in England even the common arts of life must have been unknown, is evident from the voyage

which Benedict undertook to France, to hire masons—for he was resolved that his walls should be strengthened by cement, *juxta Romanorum morem*. And when the building was nearly finished, he sent to the same kingdom for glaziers,—an art which, as Bede expressly asserts, was yet unknown to the English. That art, through his instrumentality, was now taught to the natives; so also was the art of building with lime, and of making glass lamps, vases, and other ornaments. If to this we add, that the pictures displayed on the walls led to imitation, and that the books he deposited in the convent library were soon multiplied by transcription, we may safely pronounce this saint as one of the benefactors to his country—as a great promoter of its civilisation. In a fifth journey to Rome, he purchased such things as he could not easily find in France, more church vases, more MSS., more paintings of the saints. These he placed in the church of St. Peter, and his motive in that age was laudable enough;—“*ut intrantes ecclesiam omnes etiam literarum ignari, quaquaversum intenderent, vel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque ejus, quamvis in imagine, contemplarentur aspectum; vel Dominicæ incarnationes gratiam vigilantiori mente recolerent; vel extremi discrimen examinis, quasi coram oculis habentes, districtius se ipse examinare meminissent.*” Little could the venerable historian foresee the superstitious uses which would be made of them by the ignorant,—for by none but the ignorant has the symbol been confounded with the subject. The good effected by St. Benedict Biscop was so evident, that in a few years king Egfrid presented him with another piece of ground sufficient to support forty families; and the monastery of Jarrow soon overlooked the Tyne. These foundations flourished amazingly; in a few years after the death of the abbot, they contained six hundred monks. Were these monks subject to the rule of the great St. Benedict? This question has been debated with considerable ingenuity and erudition. As Benedict himself had obeyed, in the isles of

St. Margaret, the institutions of that celebrated monastic legislator, he must naturally have given them the preference: perhaps, even, he there incurred the obligation of its perpetual observance. From Bede too, it is certain, that the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow were elected according to the provisions of the rule; and of that rule Alcuin recommends the frequent study. That it was familiar to the Saxon ecclesiastics, is evident from the fact, that St. Wilfrid established it in the monasteries he founded in Northumbria, and St. Boniface in that of Fulda. We do not, however, agree with Mabillon, that these and other facts which he has industriously collected, prove that the monasteries on the Wear and the Tyne were of necessity rigorously and exclusively subject to the great rule. From the words of Benedict himself, who tells his monks that he had selected for their guidance whatever he deemed most useful, in seventeen different monasteries abroad, it is possible that he might have examined other institutes than those of the Italian saint. However this be, these institutes, doubtless, served as the basis, if they did not comprise the whole structure, of the monastic observance at Wearmouth and Jarrow. St. Benedict Biscop died in 690. In his last instructions he exhorted his monks wholly to disregard birth in the abbot they might elect—to be influenced only by his piety and learning. He emphatically declared, that, of two evils, he would prefer that his monasteries should be replaced by ancient solitude, rather than be succeeded by an unworthy brother. Before breathing his last, Sigfrid, whom he made abbot under him, and who was also at the last extremity, was brought to his cell, and for a moment laid beside him. There was something peculiarly affecting in this last interview of two friends, who had together fought the good fight, and whose affection triumphed over the agonies of death. “It was a melancholy sight,” says Bede, “to see them thus lying, without strength to take a last kiss of each other.” Sigfrid first entered the celestial kingdom: shortly afterwards, amidst the chaunt-

ing of the choir, the same heavenly gates opened to the confessor, sixteen years after the foundation of the monastery at Wearmouth. He was succeeded by Ceolfred, who trod in his steps, who doubled the library, and, at length, died at Langres, while on his pilgrimage to Rome.*

The three saints to whom we have just directed the reader's attention, — St. Fursi, St. Chad, and St. Benedict Biscop, — have attained much less celebrity than *St. Cuthbert*, the anchoretical bishop of Lindisfarne. In this, as in many other respects, fame is not measured so much by talents or virtues, or positive utility, as by more questionable standards. In virtue, all three were equal, in talents they were superior, to Cuthbert; certainly the last, probably the two first, conferred greater benefits on the country; but *their* relics could not boast of the same incorruptibility as those of the Northumbrian prelate, to whom the church of Durham owes its splendid endowments. The birthplace of St. Cuthbert was, doubtless, Britain — probably some part of Northumbria; but the time is equally uncertain with the precise place.† There is, however, reason to infer that it was about the year 635.‡ His life abounds with prodigies. The first on record is, that, being in his eighth year, and playing one day with other children, one of them, no more than three years old, prophet-

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* Bede, *Vita Sanctorum Abbatum Monasterii in Wiramutha et Gyruum*, p. 293—302. Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum Oranis S. Ben.*, tom. ii. p. 1001, &c.; necnon *Prælatio ad Seculum*, i. p. 11, &c. Alcuini Flacci, *Epistola* 49. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Januarii xii. Yepes, *Cronica General de la Orden de San Benito*, tom. ii. centuria segunda. Eddius, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, cap. 14. Reynerus, *Apostolatus Benedictinorum in Angliâ*, passim. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesie Ang. Sax.*, tom. ii. (sub annis). Capgravius, *Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. 34.

† Of this celebrated churchman three lives are extant. The one by an anonymous monk of Lindisfarne is the most ancient; since it was evidently composed partly from ocular observation, partly from the relation of the saint's friends. The second, by Bede, is almost equally ancient: it was wholly composed from report: we make either the basis of the relation in the text; not failing, however, to notice, in the other, whatever may throw light on the narrative. The third life is a metrical one, of no great authority, by the same venerable historian.

‡ He died in 688, near thirty-seven years after his monastic profession, which we may refer to the year 652. As he professed young, we cannot well suppose him to have been born before 635.

ically addressed him as bishop and presbyter (sancte episcopo et presbyter Cuthberte!), and earnestly entreated him to abandon amusements so puerile and so little consistent with his future gravity. His monastic biographer mentions this as a proof that he had long been predestined, like the prophets and apostles of old, to miraculous works. A sober judgment can have no difficulty in admitting the basis of the legend, and in accounting for the superstructure, without the accidents of either miracle or imposture: in a credulous age, the most natural events may be easily transformed into marvels.* The second reputed miracle is still more explicable by natural reasons. About the same time (*in eadem ætate*), he was grievously afflicted by a swelling in the knee, and by an adstriction of the nerves, so painful that he could not set his foot to the ground. Being one day carried and seated outside the house, to enjoy the air and sun, a man on horseback approached, and asked for hospitality. "Willingly would I show it," replied the boy, "if my lameness did not prevent me." Hearing these words, the stranger dismounted, examined the part, and prescribed a hot poultice of oatmeal, milk, and oil, which, in a few days, restored him to perfect soundness of limb. Of course the horseman was an angel, and the cure miraculous,—a notion which even Cuthbert himself, in the fervour of his enthusiasm, appears to have formed. This fact speaks volumes as to the ignorance of the Northumbrian peasants,—for such were the parents of Cuthbert,—who were evidently unacquainted with the simplest of all remedies.† In a few years we find the predestined youth a shepherd, probably not far from the Tweed: a miracle drove him from the care of sheep to that of souls. One night

* This first miracle is related by Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, cap. i., but not with equal simplicity.

† Also mentioned by Bede, but with such embellishments as to lessen him greatly in our opinion as an historian.—"Vidit repente venientem de longe equitem, *albis indutum vestimentis et honorabilem vultu; sed et equum, cui insidebat, incomparabili decoris.*"—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, cap. 2. Where did Bede find these words in italics;—these white vestments, majestic countenance, and incomparably beautiful horse?

while his flocks were reposing, and he was watching as usual, he saw heaven opened, and angels ascending with the soul of one who had just expired. He awoke his companions, and told them his vision, observing that it must be the soul of some holy bishop or other great man ; it proved to be that of St. Aidan, who died that very night. This third miracle carries with it its own explanation. The vision was simply a dream ; the character of which was, of necessity, impressed by the general tenor of his waking thoughts : its application could not be difficult in an age of saints. Aidan happened to die about the time : but it might just as easily have been applied to St. Oswin, who preceded the bishop only a few days to the tomb.* — Is the fourth miracle, which also happened in his youth, as explicable by rational means ? One stormy day, in winter, having crossed the Wear, near the present village of Chester-le-Street, he found that the severity of the season had caused the few shepherds' huts to be deserted ; in fact, they were inhabited only during the vernal and summer months, when the desert waste afforded pasturage. As the storm raged, he led his wearied horse into one of the huts, tied it to the wall, and began to pray. The animal, seeing that the roof was thatched with hay and straw, naturally raised its head, and began to pull away ; when—Oh, wonder !—down fell a linen cloth, containing bread and meat. As the youth was almost dying through hunger, who could doubt that he had been favoured, like Elijah of old ? † This relation appears to be no other than a simple distorted fact. The hut had not, probably, been long abandoned‡ ; and the bread and salted meat had been forgotten in the roof. Where the mind is so disposed, miracles may be made from any thing : it suited the mood of Cuthbert's, just as it did John Wesley's, to see God's peculiar providence in the most ordinary circumstances of life ; yet assuredly neither ever aimed at deception. That the

* Related by the Venerable Bede with almost equal embellishments Vita S. Cuth. cap. 4.

† Embellished by the Venerable. Vita S. C. cap. 5.

Saxon saint regarded himself as the object of supernatural protection, is evident: in return, he forsook the world to serve his Maker more assiduously in the cloister. He chose, as the place of his retreat, not the monastery of Lindisfarne, but that of Melrose, to which he was, doubtless, attracted by the celebrity of the abbot and prior, both shortly to be in the catalogue of saints.*

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The monastic life of the new convent was of such a nature as to lay the foundation of his hagiologic fame, since ascetic observances were held in much higher estimation than the moral virtues. His fasting, and vigils, and prayers, are described as almost superhuman. Here he soon received the tonsure, according to the manner of the Scottish ecclesiastics. But we shortly find him in the monastery of Ripon, of which his abbot, Eata, whom he accompanied, was elected the superior, and which was colonised by monks from Melrose. Ripon was destined to be edified by the miracles wrought in honour of his sanctity. Being the hostillar of the house, he one day entertained an angel, who, in a casual scarcity of bread, wonderfully produced three hot loaves for the refecton of his body. Of this puerile legend we shall attempt no explanation; but we must not leave unnoticed another, which appears to have happened after his return to Melrose. (The cause of this return is doubtful. Bede intimates that he, his abbot, and the other monks from Lindisfarne, were expelled, probably from some dispute with the ecclesiastics of the south.)

* *Monachus Lindisfarnensis, Vita S. Cuthberti*, cap. i. *Beda Venerabilis, Vita ejusdem Sancti*, cap. 1—5. *Bollandistæ, Acta Sanctorum, die Martii* xx. *Mabillon, Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.*, ii. 877.

The reception by the prior, St. Boisil, of the devout shepherd-boy, is mentioned by the Venerable only, of course *more suo*. "Behold," said the prior, who knew him by the spirit, even before he drew near, "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" The same veritable biographer contains a miracle wholly omitted by the monk of Lindisfarne,—how Cuthbert, while still a youth, saved some vessels from destruction by his prayers. The life of St. Cuthbert, with the wondrous fate of his relics, from the period immediately after his death to the Reformation, and even down to the year 1827, when they were examined, may be found in a very curious and elaborate work,—"*St. Cuthbert: with an Account of the State in which his Remains were found upon the Opening of his Tomb, in Durham Cathedral, in the year 1827. By James RANKIN, M.A., Rector of Meldon*," &c. It is a work well worth the perusal.

The abbess of Coldingham had invited him to visit her double monastery (the Scottish monks, very different from those of St. Benedict, appear to have been a species of vagabonds); and he went. While here, he visited, by night, the sea-shore, to sing psalms, and to meditate. A priest of the establishment, somewhat surprised at his nocturnal wanderings, and, perhaps, suspecting some assignation with a sister, — the reputation of the community was in his time far from pure, — resolved to follow him. The saint proceeded to the coast, and became the subject of a miracle scarcely less famous than that of St. Antony.* Having waded into the sea until the water was as high as his waist, probably for the same purpose as St. Peter Damian †, and remained there a while, he left the water, knelt on the sand, and prayed. While thus occupied, two animals followed his track, knelt like him, licked his feet, and rubbed them with their fleeces to make them warm, until the conclusion of his prayers; when, having received his benediction, they returned to the deep. As by this time it was the crowing of the cock, the saint returned to join the brethren at their devotions in the church of the convent. The astonished eye-witness fell, the following day, at the feet of the saint, and implored pardon; which he obtained, on the condition of never mentioning the miracle during the life of its object.‡ This condition clearly acquaints us with the fact that St. Cuthbert was no party to the imposture, — of which, indeed, he was wholly incapable, — but that it was the work of his unscrupulous monks, who cared not what fable they invented, so that they only enriched his shrine. Of the same character is the following: — Having sailed with two monks to the country of the Picts, they were, while there, sorely afflicted with famine; yet, owing to the stormy sea, were unable to return. One morning, after his accustomed nocturnal vigil on the shore, he bade his monks follow him, observing that, on so solemn a

* See Vol. I., p. 312, 313.

† Ibid. p. 208.

‡ This and the following miracles are also recorded by Bede.

festival as that of the Epiphany, provisions, he was sure, would be furnished them from above. On reaching the shore, they were overjoyed to find a dolphin cut into three parts, as if by a human hand, and perfectly cleansed by water. Take and eat, said the saint; these three parts will suffice us during three days and three nights; on the fourth, the weather will be favourable for our return. On another occasion, being on the banks of the Tweed, where he had baptized many of the pagans, he and a boy with him were assailed by the same necessity. He demanded of the boy, — "Where shall we dine to-day?" The other replied, that he knew not; that he had no acquaintance in those parts; and that help from strangers was hopeless. "Trust in God!" said the saint; "he never forsakes those who do." Looking soon afterwards into the air, he espied an eagle, and observed, — "That eagle has been commanded by heaven to provide us with this day's food." Proceeding a little further, they saw the bird sitting on the bank of the river: the boy, in obedience to the saint, went towards it, and immediately returned with a very large fish entire. "Why hast thou not given a part to our fisher?" enquired Cuthbert; the boy obeyed, and the eagle fared as well as the two Christians. Whether these, and other idle legends, had any foundation, however slight, on which invention could work, or whether they were the pure creation of the monks of Lindisfarne, would be useless to enquire. They prove, what it gives us sincere pain to perceive, knavery on the part of those whose duty it was to enlighten, not to debase, the minds of the credulous.*

660 Leaving these fabulous legends, immediately after
to his return to Melrose, St. Boisil died, and Cuthbert was
684. appointed to the dignity of prior. There is something
about the death of this Boisil that ought not to be
passed over in silence. A fatal distemper was raging in

* *Monachus Lindisfarnensis, Vita S. Cuthberti; necnon Bede, Vita ejusdem (variis capitulis). Bollandistæ, Acta Sanctorum, die Martii xx. Mabillon, Acta SS. Ben., ii. 843, &c. Raine's St. Cuthbert, p. 17.*

Henceforward we make Bede the basis of our biographical sketch of St. Cuthbert.

Northumberland: it had attacked Cuthbert, who had with difficulty—of course, the general opinion was, miraculously—recovered from it. The prior was now to be its victim,—a fate which, from his advanced years, and the ravages of disease, he could easily foresee. “Cuthbert,” said he to his beloved pupil, who was continually about his couch, “*thou* art freed from danger, and wilt live some time longer; but *I* must die; wherefore, since the use of my body and tongue will not remain above a week, I am anxious that thou shouldest continue to learn as long as I am able to teach!”—“And what,” replied Cuthbert, “may I most profitably read during a week?”—“John the Evangelist! my copy is divided into seven parts, one of which we may read daily.” Bede, however, from whom this relation is extracted, does not fail to inform us, that there was a reason why it might be read thus quickly, since their object was not to raise curious questions for disputation, but simply the edification of the soul. At the end of the week the prior died, distinctly predicting, as we are told, that Cuthbert would be a bishop. As Cuthbert now filled the place of his deceased friend, and was renowned for sanctity, such a prediction might be made without rashness. In 664, we find him in the monastery of Lindisfarne, as prior, under the same abbot, Eata, whom he had obeyed at Melrose, and accompanied to Ripon. Here he remained twelve years in the practice of all the virtues that could adorn the character of a churchman. Here was his proper sphere: he governed his monks with patient firmness; he preached the Gospel to the Northumbrians; he allured all, by his example no less than by his teaching, to a better life. At the end of that period, however, he proved that he had yet to learn the rational duties of Christianity: under the pitiful, however common, plea of acquiring greater perfection,—as if that perfection were not best acquired amidst men,—he resolved to forsake the cœnobitical for the eremitical life. By way of experiment, however, he first lived as an anchorite in

Tondbert, bishop of Hexham, in a synod over which presided Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, Cuthbert was elected to the vacant dignity. For some time the saint obstinately refused to assume the episcopal functions ; and it required the presence of Trumwin, bishop of the Picts, of the greater part of the synod, and of king Egfrid himself, to make him change his purpose. This is mentioned to his praise by his contemporary biographers, — a lamentable proof into what a perverted channel the religious spirit of the age had deviated. If piety be enlightened by common sense, that station of life will be preferred which is most likely to benefit others : it is a narrow, unsocial, sour, selfish, pernicious spirit which leads the ascetic to forsake his most obvious duties to bury himself in useless solitude. Like many other fanatics of the time, Cuthbert was a stranger to rational devotion : he had to learn that, by the wise providence of God, even the end he had in view — his personal holiness — was attached to the discharge of the active duties. In seeking the good of others, man finds his own : if he wishes his mind and heart to be sanctified, he must repair, not to the hermitage, but to the bosom of society. It is, indeed, true, that, without occasional retirement, without frequent communings with his own heart in solitude, there can be no enlightened piety ; but solitude may be attained in the most populous city, as well as in the most distant wilderness. The mischief is, that Cuthbert, feeling, from his own experience, how necessary was tranquil communion with God to his own spiritual progress, confounded what should be occasional with what he believed should be of perpetual obligation ; he did not know that action and contemplation must assist each other. With extreme reluctance he left his hermitage, and was consecrated at York by Theodore, the primate, and seven bishops. But his heart sighed for his favourite haunts, — for the places where he had so often experienced “ that peace which the world cannot give.” In less than a year from his consecration, he exchanged sees

with his old superior and friend St. Eata, who had been long abbot, and was now bishop of Lindisfarne, and joyfully returned to that island.*

684 to 687. Whatever might be the mistaken notions of the saint in regard to the active duties of men, it is certain that, though his constitution was naturally weak, and still more enfeebled by disease and austerities, he proved an excellent bishop. Of this pleasing fact we have abundant testimony in Bede:—“By his continual prayers, he defended the people committed to his charge; by his salutary exhortations, he led them to the heavenly kingdom; and, what is most efficacious in teachers, he practised beforehand the duties which he taught. He snatched the feeble from the hands of the rich, the poor and helpless from their oppressors. He consoled the sorrowful and the faint-hearted, but reduced to solemn sadness before God those who had rejoiced in evil. To himself he was severe; he loved the greatest frugality, and to practise amidst the bustle of the world the rigorous observances of the cloister. He provided food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, and, in all things, he showed that he was endued with the virtues becoming the episcopal character.” Let not the puerile miracles recorded by the venerable but childish and credulous historian detract from the glory of this animated picture; since, assuredly, Cuthbert is not responsible for the fables with which superstition has invested his memory. In about ten years, however, exhausted nature could do no more. The saint felt that his end was approaching; and he resolved to die in his beloved island of Farne. As he stepped into the boat which was to carry him over, the monks eagerly crowded around him, and asked when he would revisit his cathedral. His words were ominous:—“When my corpse is brought hither!” This was soon after Christmas: on the 27th day of February, he was assailed by the illness which,

* *Monachus Lindisfarnensis, Vita S. Cuthberti*, lib. iii. Bede, *Vita ejusdem*, cap. 17—25. Bollandus, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Martii xx. Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ben.* tom. ii. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. i. p. 694. Raine's *St. Cuthbert*, p. 20, &c.

in about three weeks, proved fatal to him. On the morning of that day the island was visited by Herefrid, abbot of Lindisfarne, from whom Bede derived the chief part of the relation. The object of the abbot was to profit by the exhortations and the benediction of the bishop: he made the usual signal; and the saint appeared at the casement, replying with a groan to the salutation. Though he invited the abbot to return at a convenient hour, and intimated his approaching departure, he would not allow any monks to be sent from Lindisfarne to minister to his wants. Evidently, however, it was the intention of the abbot to disregard the prohibition; but, during five days, so fierce a storm raged, that the transit was impossible. No sooner did the weather permit, than the monks hastily put out to sea. They found the bishop in the great hall on the beach. Here, he confessed to the abbot, he had remained five days and nights, with no better sustenance than part of one onion. Did the saint wish to hasten his own end? or was the trouble of ministering to his own wants too much for him in his then state of disease? However this be, this criminal abstinence doubtless hastened his death. The support of his body was evidently an object beneath his regard. He spoke of his struggles with the enemy of man during the last five days; but the abbot durst not question him minutely on the point. This time he allowed some of the monks to remain on the island; with the abbot, however, he at length reluctantly agreed that his body, which he wished to be deposited in his rectory, should be laid in the cathedral of Lindisfarne. How well he foresaw his future celebrity, is not the least curious part of his dying discourse: — “I would rather,” he observed, “be buried on this island, where I have fought the good fight, and where I must finish my course, and where I hope from the merciful Judge the crown of righteousness. And I think it would be even better for yourselves that I should rest here, because of the numbers who will claim sanctuary: whatever I

may be in myself, yet, as I shall be remembered as a servant of Christ, they will flock to my body; so that you will be compelled to intercede for them with the powerful of the earth, and will, consequently, be subject to much trouble on my account." Soon after his reluctance had been removed, he grew rapidly worse. Being carried back to his rectory, he was prevailed on to choose one of the monks to remain with him, while the rest occupied the house on the beach. Before the evening of that day the abbot was summoned to the hut: the dying bishop was reclined in a corner opposite to the altar. His last instructions, which Herefrid was to convey to his monks, strongly inculcated the Christian virtues. He exhorted them to peace among themselves, to charity with all the world, to ungrudging hospitality, to catholic unity, to every Christian and monastic virtue. Amidst these exhortations, feebly delivered, and interrupted by bodily suffering, he received the holy sacraments, and, with eyes and hands raised to heaven, yielded up the ghost.*

The fame, however, of the living, is far inferior to that of the dead, St. Cuthbert. How, eleven years after his decease, his tomb was opened, and his body found incorrupt; how the body was afterwards venerated; how, in the time of Eardulf, the sixteenth and last bishop of Lindisfarne, it was removed by the monks, who fled from the fury of the Danes, and, after some years' wanderings, deposited in a wooden church at Chester-le-Street; how it remained there, the shrine continually enriched by the piety of the faithful, under nine successive bishops, until the pirates again forced the monks to flee with it; how, when the danger was past, and they were returning towards their cathedral of Chester-le-Street, they fixed on the romantic site where Durham now stands as the future abode of the holy

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. iv. cap. 27, 28, 29.; necnon *Vita S. Cuthberti*, cap. 26—39. *Monachus Lindisfarnensis, Vita ejusdem*, lib. iv. *Bollandistæ, Acta Sanctorum, die Martii xx.* Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ben.*, tom. ii. Alfordus, *Ann. Ecclesie Anglo-Sax.*, tom. ii. p. 390, &c. Raine's *St. Cuthbert*, p. 27, &c.

relics ; and how, from the close of the tenth century, the shrine, and, consequently, the cathedral, were enriched by splendid endowments, are among the most memorable facts of superstition. We have neither space nor inclination for the history of these relics : especially as it is to be found in one of the most curious works which has lately issued from the press ; which, though little known, richly deserves to be so.* The reader need not be told, that these endowments have, since the Reformation, been in the hands of the dean and chapter of Durham.

To *St. Wilfrid* we have already devoted a short section in the second volume of the present work ; but what we then related, regarded his missionary exertions only : his name, however, is too memorably connected with the English church to be passed over in silence. A Northumbrian himself, in favour with king Egfrid, and respected for his piety and zeal, it might have been expected that he would pass peacefully through life : yet no life was ever more troubled. His, in fact, was an unbending mind : while a youth in the monastery of Lindisfarne, he learned to condemn some points of its discipline. To observe that of other countries, he obtained the permission of the abbot to visit France and Italy. Taking Canterbury in his way, he admired many of the observances established by St. Augustine. From thence, accompanied by Benedict Biscop, he proceeded first to Lyons, next to Rome ; where he soon learned to despise still more the rude customs of Lindisfarne, especially in regard to the celebration of Easter, and to the clerical tonsure. With what zeal he entered into this controversy, — that he could be as obstinate on one side as St. Columbanus on the other †, — was found on his return. By prince Alfred, his friend and pupil, he was presented with the monastery of Ripon ; and he immediately expelled all the monks who refused to conform with the customs of the universal church. He replaced them by others, in a great measure foreign

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* Raine's *St. Cuthbert*.

† See Vol. II. p. 180.

monks, who had been taught to practise the rule of St. Benedict. By him that rule was first introduced into Northumbria—we may add into England; for his friend Benedict Biscop did not establish it on the banks of the Tyne until some years afterwards. Not satisfied with introducing uniformity into his monastery, he laboured to diffuse it throughout the kingdom. At his instigation was, in a great measure, the celebrated dispute on this subject in the monastery of Whitby; where Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, defended the Irish, himself the Roman, or universal, discipline. To show how divided our ancestors were on this subject, we may mention that, while king Oswy followed the practice of the missionaries from Iona, his queen Eanfleda, who had been educated in Kent, adhered to that of Rome: nor did it unfrequently happen, that the same solemnities were celebrated at very different times in his palace. Though St. Chad, the abbess St. Hilda, and even the monarch, inclined to the opinions of Colman, all were convinced by the reasoning of Wilfrid, or perhaps, by the authority of Oswy; who, hearing the Scottish monks themselves acknowledge that to St. Peter had been confided the care of the church universal, and believing that the Roman practice was authorised by the great apostle, soon declared for the latter. From the arguments—or what, at least, were intended to be such—proved by Bede and by Eddius the biographer of St. Wilfrid, it is evident that neither party really understood the question. However, on good resulted: uniformity was established; Colman who refused to subscribe, returning to Iona, being succeeded by Tuda, the first orthodox bishop of Lindisfarne. The plague, however, soon removed Tuda the metropolis of Northumbria was transferred from Lindisfarne to York, and St. Wilfrid was sent by prince Alfred into Gaul, to be consecrated by the prelates of that kingdom. But, during Wilfrid's absence, king Oswy procured the consecration of Chad, abbot of Lastingham. Wilfrid at length returned, and claimed

his see, but in vain ; he was compelled to return into his monastery of Ripon, until St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, annulled the ordination of St. Chad ; who was soon afterwards the first bishop of Lichfield. Wilfrid, thus called to the episcopal duties, displayed more activity than any prelate of his age ; a fact sufficiently proved by the amazing number of churches and monasteries which he built ; and he was more instrumental than all in eradicating from the kingdom the still-lingering weeds of paganism. But though he was for some time the friend of Egfrid, the successor of Oswy, he soon incurred the royal resentment too deeply to allow him the hope of effecting future reforms. The queen of Egfrid was Edilthryda, daughter of Anna, king of the East Angles. From her earliest youth, her heart had been fixed on the cloister ; but her friends had forced her to marry Tondbert, ealdorman of the Girvii. Such however, was her grief, that, if we have any faith in ancient writers, it prevailed on Tondbert to respect her chastity. On his death, she returned to a nunnery in the Isle of Ely ; but was soon forced from it to marry Egfrid. Even that prince was persuaded to respect her vow ; but that he did so unwillingly, is certain, from the earnestness with which he pressed St. Wilfrid to dissuade her from her purpose, to allow him the rights of a husband. It appears, however, that the prelate rather fortified her in her purpose than otherwise ; for she soon retired from the court to the nunnery of Coldingham, of which the abbess was St. Ebba, a relation of Egfrid ; and, when she found the asylum was not secure from the pursuits of her husband, she precipitately retreated to her former abode in Ely. Of this community she was eventually the abbess. From the fact that her body was discovered incorrupt some time after her death, Bede is positive that she was undefiled by man. However this might be, the archbishop was no longer in the favour of the king. But, after the marriage of Egfrid with a second wife, Ermenburga, coolness was aggravated into dislike. The new queen was haughty

monks, who had been taught to practise the rule of St. Benedict. By him that rule was first introduced into Northumbria—we may add into England; for his friend Benedict Biscop did not establish it on the banks of the Tyne until some years afterwards. Not satisfied with introducing uniformity into his monastery, he laboured to diffuse it throughout the kingdom. At his instigation was, in a great measure, the celebrated dispute on this subject in the monastery of Whitby; where Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, defended the Irish, himself the Roman, or universal, discipline. To show how divided our ancestors were on this subject, we may mention that, while king Oswy followed the practice of the missionaries from Iona, his queen Eanfleda, who had been educated in Kent, adhered to that of Rome: nor did it unfrequently happen, that the same solemnities were celebrated at very different times in his palace. Though St. Chad, the abbess St. Hilda, and even the monarch, inclined to the opinions of Colman, all were convinced by the reasoning of Wilfrid, or, perhaps, by the authority of Oswy; who, hearing the Scottish monks themselves acknowledge that to St. Peter had been confided the care of the church universal, and believing that the Roman practice was authorised by the great apostle, soon declared for the latter. From the arguments—or what, at least, were intended to be such—proved by Bede and by Eddius, the biographer of St. Wilfrid, it is evident that neither party really understood the question. However, one good resulted: uniformity was established; Colman, who refused to subscribe, returning to Iona, being succeeded by Tuda, the first orthodox bishop of Lindisfarne. The plague, however, soon removed Tuda; the metropolis of Northumbria was transferred from Lindisfarne to York, and St. Wilfrid was sent by prince Alfred into Gaul, to be consecrated by the prelates of that kingdom. But, during Wilfrid's absence, king Oswy procured the consecration of Chad, abbot of Lastingham. Wilfrid at length returned, and claimed

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and vindictive ; and the reproofs of Wilfrid, who, in the discharge of his duty, was no respecter of persons, made her vow revenge. She, or, what is the same thing, her husband, had influence enough to dispose the primate Theodore to her purpose. Theodore had long lamented the unwieldy extent of the diocese of York, and had resolved to divide it into several sees. Taking advantage of the royal support, he arbitrarily converted these bishops. Wilfrid remonstrated, and appealed to Rome, whither he hastened to prosecute that appeal in person. On his way he was beset by the emissaries of Ermenburga ; but he escaped, pleaded his cause, and procured from a synod the recognition of his rights. But this availed little with the king and queen, who on his return threw him into prison ; nor was he suffered to leave it until, through the interference of St. Hilda, he had engaged never more to set his foot within the province of Northumbria. During this second exile, Wilfrid converted the South Saxons, as in his first he had laid the foundation for that of the Frisians.* On this occasion he is said to have endeared himself to the men of Sussex, by teaching them the art of fishing with the net. On the death of Egfrid, Wilfrid returned to Northumbria, and, by king Alfred, was successively put in possession of the three bishoprics, Hexham, Lindisfarne, and York. During the next five years he was distinguished for all his usual activity ; but we may doubt whether his zeal was always accompanied by prudence : he certainly did not possess the more amiable virtues, for he made enemies on every side. Part, and a great part, of the hostility he incurred, was owing to his defence of the church : he reclaimed in a loud voice certain monies, which during his absence had been alienated from the monastery of Ripon ; and as these had been conferred on courtiers, all who were interested raised an outcry against his grasping restless ambition. Such, indeed, was the storm he encountered, that he was again compelled to flee, and appeal to the sovereign pontiff. Again did he appear in the capital of the

Christian world, to urge the cause of the church ; and again, after long and patient examination, was his conduct approved. But he was now advanced in years ; he had passed twenty in exile ; his enemies were numerous, active, powerful, and not likely to obey the mandates of a distant authority. Eager to end his days in peace, he proposed a compromise, — to leave his rivals in possession of their sees, on condition of his being restored to Ripon and Hexham. Alfred, however, refused to receive him ; nor was it until that monarch's death, that the Northumbrian church consented to acknowledge him. He did not long survive his triumph : he died in 709. Of the miracles recorded even by his chaplain Eddius, we shall say nothing ; whether the biographer believed them, was best known to himself and to God. Of St. Wilfrid different opinions have been given : by some he has been held up as one of the brightest ornaments of the universal church ; by others he has been severely reprehended, not only for his arrogance, but for his appeals to the pope, — in other words, for sacrificing the independence of the Anglo-Saxon church. The truth, however, is, that he deserves no such censure. When unjustly deprived of his rights — when even the primate favoured his personal enemies — when he invoked in vain the provisions of the canons — what hope of relief but in a tribunal, which, from its distance, could not be influenced by local prejudice, and which, from its elevation, was supposed inaccessible to corruption ? — a tribunal too, let us remember, the jurisdiction of which was recognised by the whole Western church. Of St. Wilfrid's zeal in the conversion of idolaters, — of the Frisian no less than the South Saxon, — his successful labours are sufficient evidence ; and it is certain that he both benefited religion by the erection of churches and monasteries, and by his anxiety to diffuse salutary knowledge among the ecclesiastics of his extensive diocese.*

* Eddius, *Vita S. Wilfredi*, cap. 1—62. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. iv. cap. 12, &c. Fridegodus, *Vita Metrica S. Wilfredi*, p. 171, &c.

600 During this period several female saints adorned the
to church by their virtues. All of them were of blood
740. royal; for the Anglo-Saxons would never have recognised holiness in a female of inferior station. Rejecting St. Eanswitha, daughter of Eadbald king of Kent, of whom we have no record until seven centuries after her death, one of the most ancient Saxon saints is *Hilda*, of the royal house of Northumbria. Born about the year 600, this lady remained for some years a pagan, until the conversion of her kinsman Edwin introduced Christianity into the province. In her the new faith was all active: in the resolution of devoting herself to a religious life, she cast her eyes on France, where the monastic institute flourished; but from East Anglia she was recalled by St. Aidan, who placed her in a little community on the banks of the Wear. From thence she was transferred to a new foundation at Hartlepool; and subsequently to another foundation, the situation of which cannot be gathered from the brief words of the venerable Bede. We only know that her conduct as abbess procured her the favour of St. Aidan. She was soon to govern a fourth and more celebrated community. On the eve of a contest with the ferocious Penda, king Oswy vowed that, if victorious, he would dedicate his infant daughter Elfreda to the monastic state, found a religious house, and endow it with twelve hydes of land. His prayer was heard: Penda fell. The grateful Oswy first placed his daughter under the care of St. Hilda, at Hartlepool, and then proceeded to erect the church and monastery of Whitby. In this new foundation the abbess Hilda is said by her venerable biographer to have exhibited all the virtues becoming her character and station,—humility, peace, charity, zeal, unwearied piety. Above all, he praises the patience with which, during the last

Eadmer, *Vita ejusdem*, p. 197, &c. (ambo apud Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ben.*, tom. iii. pars i. p. 169—222. P. Landstæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die xxiv. Aprilis. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. i. p. 645. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (sub annis). Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Ang.-Sax.*, tom. ii. (variis annis, præcipuè 709).

six years of her life, she bore the pains of disease ; adding, that her heart was still further purified by suffering. The death of such a saint must, of course, be attended by some miraculous manifestation. That very night, (December, 680), a nun of a convent about three miles from Scarborough, while awake in the dormitory, suddenly heard the sound of the passing-bell : looking upwards, the roof of the house seemed to be removed, a glorious light was diffused above her, and amidst it she perceived the soul of the abbess conveyed by angels to its heavenly home. In the government of Whitby, St. Hilda was succeeded by *St. Elfleda*, the royal daughter of Oswy, who in a few years had the satisfaction to receive into the same community her widowed mother St. Eanfleda. *St. Ebba* (obit 683), of the same royal house, and abbess of Coldingham, is also noted for her holiness. Next come the canonised princesses of the house of East Anglia, Sexberga, Ethelberga, and Withberga, all sisters of Edilthryda. 1. St. Sexberga was married to Erconbert, king of Kent : after her husband's death she governed as regent to her son Egbert ; and when that prince reached mature years, she returned to a monastery in the isle of Sheppey, and afterwards to that of Ely, then governed by her sister Edilthryda, whom, in 679, she succeeded. Before leaving Sheppey, however, she had the consolation of being joined by her daughter, St. Ermenilda, the widow of Wulphere, king of the Mercians. St. Ermenilda succeeded her mother in the monasteries of Sheppey and Ely. She too had a daughter, St. Werberga, who entered the cloister a virgin, and arrived at the dignity of abbess ; and she had a sister who embraced the monastic life in France. 2. *St. Ethelberga*, an illegitimate daughter of Auna, also assumed the veil in a foreign country, and died in all the odour of sanctity. Of her holiness, indeed, what doubt could be entertained, when “ post septem annos obitus sui corpus ejus ita intemeratum invenitur, ita ut a criminalis concupiscentiæ corruptione erat immune ? ” Incorruptibility was, in fact, the great test of holiness during the middle

ages. 3. The most remarkable, however, of the four sisters was *St. Withberga*,—not so much from her character or actions, as for the wondrous miracles of which she was the object. This princess, having retired to a sequestered place in the county of Norfolk, there, built an oratory, in which she passed her time so intensely occupied in heavenly contemplation, that she had neither leisure nor inclination to regard the support of her body. Yet she was too great a favourite with Heaven to die for want. “One night the Queen of virgins appeared to her in a dream, adorned with ineffable beauty, exhorting her to have confidence in God, not to be thoughtful about the support of the body, nor to trouble herself about to-morrow. ‘At dawn of day,’ the glorious added, ‘send two of thy maids to the nearest bridge of the neighbouring rural stream. There will they daily find two white does; milk them, and your wants will be supplied:’ wherefore the next morning she sent the two maids to the bridge, which was distant one stadium: there behold the two does, as quiet as if they had been tamed! The virgins having milked them, obtained such an abundance, that the vessel required two men to carry it on their shoulders, and that the wants of all were satisfied.” The sheriff of Dereham, however, to whom intelligence of the miracle arrived, resolved to hunt the animals, collected his dogs, hastened to the place, and killed one of them; but he was instantly assailed by a swift mortal disease. This fable is, doubtless, founded on the fact, that the saint was fed by one of her does which she had tamed. One only is mentioned by William of Malmesbury: the other, with the attendant circumstances, is the invention of tradition, as collected by Capgrave.—In the ecclesiastical councils of the Anglo-Saxons, we meet with no less than four saints of the name of *Ethelberga*. Besides the one we have already mentioned,—the illegitimate daughter of Auna king of the East Angles, and besides the queen of St. Ina, whom we shall hereafter notice, there was, 1. *Ethelberga*, the daughter of Ethelbert of Kent, and

wife of Edwin king of Northumbria.* After her husband's death, she returned with St. Paulinus into Kent, and, receiving from the hands of Paulinus the consecrated veil, she lived in the practice of the Christian virtues until the year 647. 2. But king Auna had also a *legitimate* daughter, whom posterity reverences as St. Ethelberga, and who was much more celebrated than her illegitimate sister. For her was founded the celebrated abbey of Barking, by her brother St. Erconwald. Of her sanctity the venerable Bede finds evidence enough in the miracles wrought in her honour, or through her intercession. Like some other of the Anglo-Saxon saints, her soul was seen transported to heaven by numerous angels. She was succeeded (676) by *St. Hildelita*, who, during twenty-four years, governed the monastery with great reputation. Of the parentage or birth of this abbess, we know nothing: we may conjecture, however, that it was noble, probably royal, or she would scarcely have attained so high a dignity in a nation where there was little merit without it. To her St. Aldhelm dedicated his work in praise of virginity; a proof that she was held in high esteem by that excellent prelate. The last female saint we shall notice in this place was *Frideswitha*, who appears to have flourished about the middle of the eighth century. Her life is evidently wrapped in fable; nor need this surprise us, when we consider that it is first related by William of Malmesbury. That, like the rest, she was of noble and even of royal race, and that, more than all the rest, her heart yearned to the cloister, may be admitted. After receiving the veil, she is said to have prayed 100 times every day, and as many during the silence of night. But she had the misfortune to be beautiful and the still greater one of inflaming with love the heart of a neighbouring prince, who, first by entreaties, and soon by menaces, endeavoured to lead her to the altar. When these were alike ineffectual, he prepared to storm the monastery, and carry her away: to escape him, she

* See page 171. of the present volume.

secretly fled into the woods. But Algar was soon acquainted with her retreat: pursued even here, she precipitately fled, during a dark and tempestuous night, to Oxford,—a city whose existence we now learn for the first time. She was still pursued; but scarcely did her persecutor reach the gates, when he was struck blind—doubtless by the electric fluid—and compelled to confess his sin. Whether, as the grave historian assures us, he recovered his sight through her intercession, we shall not stop to enquire. One thing at least is certain, that the gate through which Algar entered was dreaded in later times; for Malmesbury bears testimony to the fact, that the English kings carefully avoided it, and were loth even to accept the hospitality of the city. Whatever may be thought of the affair,—whether it be regarded as miracle, as accident, or as the effect of God's providence,—Frideswitha appears to have been no more molested unto the end of her mortal career. The monastery over which she presided suffered some mutations in after-ages: now the nuns were removed for canons secular; next the canons were displaced by monks; but in the twelfth century the cononical institute was restored.*

- 670 The life of *St. Guthlake*, patron of the great monastery
 to of Croyland, has been written by Felix, a monk of Janew,
 714. nearly contemporary with the saint; yet this circumstance does not render the relation less miraculous.† The time of his birth is unknown; but it was probably about the middle of the seventh century‡; and it was noble, for his father was of the royal house of Mercia.

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. ii. iii. iv. (in multis capitulis). Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, de Pontificibus, lib. iv. Thomas Elyensis, *Historia Elyensis*, p. 598, &c. (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. i.) Capgravius, *Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. 139. 152. 179. 180. 278. 299. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Aprilis xxiv., die Junii xxiii., die Feb. iii., &c. Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Ben.*, sæcula vii. et viii. tom. ii. iii. iv. (in variis scripturis). Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonice*, tom. ii. A. D. 647. 664. 676. 680. 692. 700. 716. 740. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (sub annis). Reynerus *Apostolatus Benedictinorum in Anglia* (variis locis).

† It has also been written by subsequent ecclesiastics,—by Ordericus Vitalis, by Petrus Blesensis, by Gulielmus Rameseyensis, and others.

‡ According to H. den (Polychronica, p. 243.), he entered the cloister in 696. He was then full twenty-four years of age.

A miracle preceded it ; for, while his mother was in the pain of labour, a celestial hand was seen to descend and make the sign of the cross on the threshold of the house. While a collected multitude were wondering at this portent, a woman came running from the apartment of the mother to announce the birth of a male child. What doubt could be entertained that the infant Guthlake was destined either to great worldly prosperity or to great holiness ? His sage behaviour while a child ; his contempt for frivolous amusements and for old wives' tales, which were a proof of his wisdom ; his love towards his parents ; his obedience to his elders ; his condescension towards his inferiors ; his charity towards all ; his sincerity, mildness, sweetness of disposition, which no less evinced the excellence of his heart ; naturally confirmed the impression. Unfortunately, hagiology is much less instructive than it might have been rendered ; the purpose of the biographer is, not to exhibit the workings of the evil and the good in the mind of his hero, not to show by what means the worst passions of our nature have been subdued, but blindly to invest him with every possible virtue, to represent these virtues as the inevitable effect of God's peculiar favour, and to prove that favour by miracles. Few of these credulous however sincere biographers seem to have suspected that human character is the creature of circumstances ; that virtue must be acquired by combat and victory ; that every defeat weakens, while every conquest confirms, the good principle ; that, where human frailty is unable to contend with the most powerful of our adversaries, heavenly aid may be invoked with confidence ; that man's destiny,—the formation of his character here, his happiness consequently hereafter,—is in his own hands. By representing their subject as miraculously favoured, as blessed from his childhood with intuitive holiness, as above the assaults of temptation, they did not perceive that they were removing him above the sphere of imitation, and, consequently, that the contemplation of his life must be useless. Had they called to

mind the apostolic saying, "Where there is no struggle there is no crown," we should have had something better than mere empty, bombastic, pompous eulogia. These remarks will apply to nine tenths of hagiologic writers. It is well that *one* tenth can be made available to the purposes of human instruction; it is still better that even the majority sometimes unconsciously allow facts to escape them, which a judicious reader can render subservient to the same purpose. There is another defect in their composition, striking enough to deserve reprehension,—the impress which they have of the peculiar spirit of the age. Thus, amidst the insecurity of persons and property during the interminable wars of the polyarchy, when the laws were openly despised by the powerful, the ecclesiastical biographers of the period, whose moral sense has been weakened by familiarity with scenes of violence, relate some strange deeds with scarcely a sentence of reprobation. For example; when Guthlake approached manhood, feeling that he inherited the martial blood of his ancestors, he did not scruple to make war on his personal enemies*,—for we have no reason to suppose they were the enemies of Mercia; to destroy their towns and villages with fire and sword, and to drive away the flocks and herds with impunity: with reverence be it spoken, he appears to have been no better than a bandit chief. Even at this season, however, he showed one sign of grace—"velut ex divino consilio edoctus," says Felix—he returned one third of the live stock to the peasants. In this predatory career he passed nine years, unmindful, no doubt, as every one else must have been, of the miraculous appearance at his birth. He seems, however, at length, "*post tot prædas, cædes, rapinasque*," to have grown tired of his freebooting life, and capable of better impressions. In this state of mind, as he one night laid down his wearied limbs to repose, remorse instead of sleep visited his pillow. As he reflected on the lawless lives and

* "*Cum adversantium sibi urbes et villas, vicos et castella, igne ferroque vastaret.*"

miserable end of the Mercian princes whom he had lately so much imitated, he began to tremble for the consequences : his own death could not be happier, yet it might arrive before the rising of another sun. This fact proves that his infancy had not been wholly neglected, and that he was of a contemplative disposition. Calling to mind the denunciations of Christ to the Jews, which, from his limited knowledge of scriptural interpretation, he applied to his own case, he vowed that, if his life were spared to the following day, he would reform it. Morning came ; and though the sun shone with unrivalled glory, and the merry birds sounded their tuneful pipes *, — Felix is sometimes poetical, — Guthlake did not forget his vow. Making the sign of the cross, and arraying himself in a rustic dress, he hastened to his companions, and bade them elect another captain, since God had destined him to a widely different life ; nor could their exhortations divert him from his purpose. He was now in his twenty-fourth year, — an age in which he might justly dread the instability of his resolution, if he ventured to mix with the world. At such a period, in such a country, his wisest refuge was the cloister. By the abbess of Ripadum † — which was a double monastery — he was shorn, and soon permitted to receive the habit. From this period his manner of life was changed ; he no longer tasted inebriating or delicate liquors, *except at the communion*. ‡ This temperance, however, was not very agreeable to his brother monks ; a set of jolly Benedictines, who hated him for it, until his mildness, humility, and modesty compelled them to love him. *Their* manners,

* “ Matutinæ volucres avido forcipe pipant.”

† Ripadum. Where was it ? It was not Ripon, which does not appear to have been a *double* monastery. In the time of William of Malmesbury, it no longer existed ; but he tells us it was in the county of Chester.

‡ “ Non ullius inebriantis liquoris aut alicujus delicati libaminis haustum, excepto communicationis tempore, gustavit.” — *Felix*, p. 267. The words are important, since they prove that *he* — and he was no priest — received the communion in both kinds. Was there a dispensation for monks not in priests’ orders ? or, was the cup generally administered to the laity ? The latter was doubtless the case ; and the custom was probably derived from the Scottish missionaries, not from those in communion with the Continental church.

however, little suited the rigour of his ; so that, in about two years, he resolved to forsake the cenobitical for the eremitical life. The place which he selected for his retreat was Croyland, one of the solitary islands in the marshes of Lincolnshire, and shunned as uninhabitable. In fact, the superstition of the age was such, that nobody wished to disturb the spirits of evil in their wild and secluded abode. “The man of blessed memory” took a fisherman’s boat, and at length reached that unvisited and almost inaccessible island. There, on the feast of St. Bartholomew, whose intercession he invoked, he began to build a humble hermitage : there, far distant from human habitation, he gave himself up to prayer and meditation. He soon longed, however, for some degree of intercourse with men. With this view, he revisited his monastery, and returned with two companions. From this time forward he permitted any one to visit him,—monks, priests, or laymen ; and he allowed more than one to lead, for a season at least, an eremitical life on the same island. As the fame of his sanctity was diffused, his solitude was often relieved by the arrival of visitants—some to ask his advice, some to admire his austerities, all to benefit by his discourses. These austerities were indeed great : his garments were the skins of sheep ; his food bread and water. As most of his hours would be passed in perfect solitude, he could not expect to escape its usual temptations. In such a state, that mind must be collected indeed, must possess an extraordinary degree of firmness, which can at all times preserve its sanity : there, superstitions acquire fearful energy ; an ideal world will insensibly arise around the hermit,—the more vivid its impressions, as those of the real one fade from his remembrance. In every breeze, in the motion of every tree, in the murmuring of every stream, St. Guthlake might fancy a sound more than human : there is no doubt, too, that he confounded his sleeping with his waking visions ;—that life itself had become a dream, in which he was unable to determine the limits of reality and of ima-

gination. Where a fancy was thus influenced by the wildest impressions, and where the senses no longer obeyed the sobriety of reason, every thing would assume a supernatural character. Hence the attempts which, as the bewildered hermit believed, the powers of darkness made to seduce or annoy him. Demons came in the storm ; they entered at his door ; they penetrated through the interstices in the sides of his rude hut ; now they scoffed and laughed at him ; now defied or pitied him. Nay, sometimes they seized him bodily, and plunged him into a neighbouring pool, or whisked him through thorns and bushes ; at other times they flogged him : in fact, there was scarcely a freak which they did not play on this holy man. One night, while occupied, as usual, in vigils and prayers,—it was very stormy,—he beheld a whole legion of unclean spirits fill his cell, through the door, through the chinks, down the chimney, through the roof, out of the earth, and like a dark cloud diffused in the atmosphere. In describing these devils, Felix is truly eloquent : there is not, in the whole range of hagiology, or common romance, any thing so graphic as the following picture, which we give in his own words : —“ *Erant enim aspectu truces, formâ terribiles, capitibus magnis, collis longis, macilentâ facie, lurido vultu, squalidâ barbâ, auribus hispidis, fronte torvâ, trucibus oculis, ore foetido, dentibus equinis, gutture flammivomo, faucibus tortis, labro lato, vocibus horrissonis, comis obustis, bucculâ crassâ, pectore arduo, femoribus scabris, genibus nodosis, cruribus uncis, talo tumido, plantis aversis, ore patulo, clamoribus raucisonis.*” Without delay these lovely creatures bound him hand and foot, whisked him out of the cell, plunged him into the nearest slimy marsh, dragged him through bushes, thorns, and briars ; and, after spending most of the night in this amusement, commanded him to leave the hermitage, which they doubtless considered as their own region. Guthlake refused : they cudgelled him ; still in vain : they afflicted him with a variety of torments ; all would not do. At length they took him on

their backs, flew with him into the cloudy cold air, their wings all the time making a noise not very musical. Having risen to a great elevation, he perceived the whole breadth of the firmament blackened with dark clouds, and new legions of shadowy beings to hover around him. With a loud cry they proceeded with him to the mouth of hell. The sight of that infernal abyss, the fiery billows on which the damned were rolled, the roaring vortices of that terrific abode, made him regard all the pains he had ever suffered as lightness compared with his present sensations. Of these horrors he was not to be a mere spectator: a voice ordered the dread portals to open, and close for ever on this doomed sinner. The man of God, however, despised their threats: he knew that they were lying; and he had soon the joy to see St. Bartholomew descend in such glory as to banish the boundless gloom around him. The glorified apostle immediately commanded the demons to conduct the saint back to his hermitage; and quicker than thought the mandate was obeyed. The following morning he heard two of them mourn, and, on asking the reason, they replied, that he had broken their power. The foundation of this wild legend was probably a dream, which common report soon converted into a reality, with the addition of such circumstances — and every new relater would add some — as were most likely to raise the fame of the hermit. Sometimes the demons were less appalling:—

“ About the same time, while the man of God was one night, according to custom, intent on his prayers, there arose a mighty sound, as if the whole island were shaken to its foundations. Shortly afterwards he heard something like the sound of advancing herds of cattle, — the earth trembling under their feet — approach the house. Immediately he perceived a variety of monsters enter his cell. There the roaring lion showed its bloody teeth and jaws; there the bellowing bull tore up the earth with its feet, and struck the floor with its bloody horn; in one part, the furious bear stretching its huge claws, threatened to crush him to death; in another, the serpent, lifting its scaly neck, darted its sting into the air. In short, the wild boar

grunted, the wolf howled, the horse neighed, the stag belled, the serpent hissed, the ox lowed, the raven croaked, — all with their horrid sounds endeavouring to disturb the soldier of God. But the saint, fortifying his heart by the sight of the cross, and despising all these phantoms, thus spoke: — ‘O wretched Satan, these are thy doings! Is it possible that thou, who wouldst once be equal with the eternal God, art fallen so low as to imitate the neighings, howlings, and croakings of the most despicable animals? In the name of Christ, who condemned thee, I command thee to cease this noisy conference!’ Quicker than thought, the whole scene vanished into air.”

At another time, while some other servant of God, who had been writing in the cell of Guthlake, left the parchment on the table, and went into the oratory to pray, a crow entered, and flew away with the letter. Great was the lamentation of the writer, until the hermit consoled him by promising him it should be returned: in fact, the bird had, naturally enough, left the unserviceable plunder on the top of some reeds, where it was easily discovered; but, of course, the act must be represented as a miracle. Crows seem to have been our hermit’s favourites: he fed them with his own hands; and they evidently became attached to him. It was the case with other birds, with which he maintained a wonderful familiarity: nay, Felix assures us that even the fish of the surrounding pools were obedient to his voice. — The exaggeration of common report made him known throughout his country: abbots, monks, nobles, flocked to see him; the sick, the lame, the blind, the possessed, to profit by his prayers. From Hedda, bishop of Dorchester, who visited his retreat, and admired his sanctity, he was persuaded to receive holy orders. The most illustrious of his guests was Ethelbald, who fled from the wrath of Ceolred king of Mercia, an enemy jealous of his royal birth and popularity, and eager to shed his blood. In disguise, and hunted from province to province, the fugitive at length hastened to the island, where he remained for some time in security, and where his heart was cheered by the consolations of religion and by the hope of better fortunes. A tender friend-

ship appears to have united the prince and the hermit. Here, whenever danger pressed, Ethelbald was sure of a retreat; here, too, his future elevation is said to have been predicted by the saint. The prediction, no doubt, followed the event; for in time, though not until Guthlake was no more, the exile ascended the throne of Mercia. St. Guthlake died in 714; and his royal friend raised over his tomb, and dedicated to his honour, the celebrated monastery of Croyland. In such a marshy region, the foundation could not be laid until immense piles had been driven into the ground, and covered with hard earth. This celebrated establishment, to which literature and religion were so much indebted, subsisted in great splendour down to the dissolution, when the hungry parasites of the court joined with that arch-robber, the eighth Harry, to fill their coffers at the expense of every thing sacred in the country.*

716. The name of this Ceolred, whom Ethelbald thus succeeded, is famous in our ecclesiastical history, from the legend to which we adverted in the life of St. Boniface.† That this “stuprator sanctimonialium,” this “ecclesiasticorum privilegiorum fractor,” who died “*sine confessione et viatico*,” would probably be damned, was the general impression; but the high authority of Boniface, archbishop, papal legate, apostle, martyr, and saint, has elevated probability into certainty. How could we know, asks Father Alford, the hidden judgments of God, in regard to this monarch, unless some one rose from the dead? “Truly,” he replies, “if there be any faith in ancient testimony, one did rise; who, guided by an angel, saw many things in the other world, and among them the soul of king Ceolred, tormented by everlasting fire.” There is still extant, in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, the letter in which St. Boniface, who had not yet left his native country‡, relates the death, super-

* Felix, *Vita S. Guthlac.*, p. 265—280. (apud Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. sæculum iii. pars i.*) Hollandista, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Aprilis xi. Ingulfus *Croylandensis, Historia*, p. 1, 2. (apud *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores*, tom. i.). Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Ang. Sax.*, tom. ii. (sub annis). Dugdale, *Monasticum Anglicanum*, tom. i. p. 163.

† Vol. II. p. 196.

‡ Ibid. p. 192.

DAMNATION OF CEOLRED.

natural adventures, and resurrection of the monk from whom he derived his information. We must not lose sight of the fact, that this information came from no second-hand source: "Ipse, cum supradicta fratre redivivo, locutus sum," says Boniface, whose truth, whatever we may think of the monk's, is far above suspicion. The letter in question was written to the abbess St. Eadburga, who wished to know from St. Boniface the particulars of the strange relation, which had evidently produced a great effect on the public mind. As it is a most curious monument of antiquity, and is not without imagination, we give the greater part of it:—

*"To the most honourable maiden and most beloved Lady Eadburga, distinguished for the wisdom of her monastic government, Winifred *, the least in Jesus Christ, health !*

"Through the venerable abbess Hildelita, I learn, dearest sister, that thou wishest me to acquaint thee, by letter, with the surprising visions seen by the man who lately died, and who was restored to life, in the monastery of the abbess Milburga. Now, thanks be unto God, that by his aid I can satisfy thy wish more fully, since I have conversed with the very man thus released from death, who has recently arrived by sea in these regions.† With his own lips he has acquainted me with the stupendous things which, while rapt in the spirit and absent from the body, he witnessed. He said, that, being afflicted with a violent disorder, he felt himself all at once relieved of his bodily load; and that the change strongly resembled what might be experienced by a waking man, whose face has been covered with an impenetrable veil, and the veil is suddenly removed; he then sees clearly what before was invisible, shrouded in darkness, unknown. In this manner the veil of his earthly body being withdrawn, the whole world lay before him, so that, at one glance, he could embrace all its parts, seas, and people. On issuing from the body, he was received by angels of such bright forms, and enveloped in such splendour, that the eye could not rest upon them; and with the most harmonious voices they sung, '*Lord, visit me not in thine anger, nor chastise me in thy sore displeasure !*' 'And they raised me high in the air, so that the round world lay beneath me, encompassed by a vast

* Vol. II. p. 195.

† Boniface probably wrote from Devonshire: a voyage or journey from one Saxon kingdom to another was then no light matter.

fire, which emitted its terrific flames towards the skies; and which appeared ready to consume the whole globe, when its fury was restrained by the sign of the cross made by angelic hands. No sooner, indeed, did the threatening element receive the mysterious impress, than it subsided, but it left behind a heat which, added to the dazzling halo surrounding the angels, was intolerably painful to my eyes, until one of them touched my head with his hand, and released me from the fiery anguish.' He then also related, that the moment he left the body, such a multitude of wandering souls assembled where he was, that he could scarcely conceive how the earth could have held them: there was a vast legion of demons, and one no less vast of heavenly angels; and great was the contention between them for the possession of every spirit which left the body. The devils were the accusers, careful to aggravate the enormity of every sin; the angels denied or excused them. Of his own wicked deeds which he had committed from his youth, he heard the minute enumeration; some he had neglected to confess; some he had forgotten; others, until the moment, he had never regarded as sins. It appeared as if his own tongue cried against him, and severely condemned him: there was one voice especially, which, leaving his body and standing before all, exclaimed, 'I am thy lust, by whom thou hast often longed for things contrary to the commands of God!' Another shadow said, 'I am *vain glory*, through whom thou hast endeavoured to obtain exaltation among men!' A third, 'I am the *spirit of lies*, in which thou hast so often indulged!' A fourth, 'I am the *evil word* uttered by thy lips!' A fifth, 'I am the *look by which* thou hast sinned!' A sixth, 'I am the *obstinate disobedience* by which thou hast opposed thy spiritual sovereign!' That exclaimed, 'I am the *spirit of torpor and listlessness* which accompanied thee in the study of holy things!' This, 'I am the *wandering thought*, the *vain anxiety*, which engrossed thee in or out of the church!' Another, 'I am *sleep*, which has prevented thee from rising early to confess thy sins unto God!'—'I am the *loiterer*,' cries one; while another vociferates, 'I am *negligence*, which rendered thee indifferent to the holy page thou wert pretending to peruse!' And so in regard to all the other sins, which, in the days of his mortal life, he had committed and neglected to confess; and many were those terribly thrown in his face to which he had never attached any guilt. Wherefore, the wicked spirits, marvellously agreeing in their accusation, loudly proved his vices by testifying as to the time and place in which each was committed. And he saw a certain man, whom, before his conversion to the monastic life he had wounded, and whom he knew to be still alive,

brought forward to witness his cruelty : there gaped the ghastly wound, there the blood itself, charging him with the deed, and crying aloud for vengeance. So his offences being cast into one heap, and duly estimated, the ancient enemies of man cried that such a sinner was justly and beyond all contradiction their own. ‘ On the other hand, I did not want excusers, who enumerated the insignificant virtues of which, wretch as I am, I was not wholly deprived. One shadow cried, ‘ I am the *obedience*, which he paid to his spiritual rulers ! ’ Another, ‘ I am the *spirit of fasting*, by which he chastised his body in opposition to the flesh ! ’ A third, ‘ I am the *anxiety* with which he administered to the sick ! ’ A fourth, ‘ I am the *divine song* which, in penance for one idle word, he poured out to God ! ’ And thus with regard to my other virtues, one of which was placed against its corresponding vice, and of which all were magnified by the glorious angels, who continually laid to my account more numerous and better qualities than I ever possessed.’ He proceeded to say, that in the depths of the world he perceived abysses of fire, many emitting a terrible blaze : that from time to time, the earth opening, and the awful flame ascending, he saw the tormented spirits like black birds, now lamenting in the fire ; and with human voices bewailing their past sins and present fate ; some sitting for a moment on the brink of the abyss, into which they again fell with dismal yells. And one of the angels said : ‘ This short respite promises, that at the day of judgment perpetual relief, yea, eternal happiness, awaits these souls. But under these abysses there are abysses still, depths unfathomable, where I have heard sounds horrid, dreadful, unspeakable ; the lamentations of souls which God’s mercy can never recall, which must for ever howl in fire unquenchable ! ’

“ But he saw another place of surpassing loveliness, in which the glorious company of the just made perfect, exulting in unspeakable beatitude, invited him, if it were lawful, to enter and rejoice with them. Great was the fragrance of the atmosphere in which the blessed moved ; their abode, as the angels affirmed, was no other than God’s paradise. In another direction he saw a fiery yet black river, boiling from its depths, and — dreadful to behold — over it lay a narrow plank, towards which holy souls just escaped from the body continually hastened, in the hope of crossing it in safety, and attaining the farther bank. Some traversed it with a firm step ; some tottered and fell into the Tartarean flood ; others were immersed in it for a moment ; some as high as their knees only ; a few to their ancles merely ; but all emerged and ascended the bank much more fair, more comely, than they were before they fell into the boiling liquid.

‘ These,’ said one of the angels, ‘ are souls which, on reaching the term of their mortal life, are not wholly purified from vice, and which consequently require some merciful punishment, before they can be presented to God.’ Beyond the river arose a wall of dazzling splendour, immeasurable in length, and of stupendous height ; and he heard the angels say, ‘ Behold the holy and immortal city, the heavenly Jerusalem, in which the spirits of the just shall everlastingly rejoice !’ Moreover, he said, that the spirits which, after passing the river, hastened to the walls of that glorious city, shone with such amazing splendour, that no eye could behold them. And he related how the ghost of a certain man who had filled the dignity of abbot, arrived among the shadowy beings ; and though that ghost was fair to look upon, the evil demons seized it, and claimed it as their own. But one of the angelic company said, ‘ Accursed spirits, soon will I show you that you have no power over this soul !’ And having thus spoken, suddenly there advanced a numerous company of white spirits, who said, ‘ This was our elder and teacher ; under his guidance we have all been redeemed from death, and drawn near to God : such a one cannot belong to you !’ And it seemed as if there were a struggle for this ghost between the angels and the demons, until the former freed it from the power of the latter. Then one of the angels rebuked the spirit of darkness, saying : ‘ Know ye of a surety, that ye seized this soul without any show of pretence ; wherefore, depart, ye wretched, into the fire unquenchable !’ And hearing this, the evil demons began to moan, and in a moment, uttering a terrific scream, they plunged into the deep fiery abysses before mentioned : after a time, however, they again emerged, and renewed their contention for the possession of newly arrived ghosts. And now, he proceeded to say, he was able to scan the merits and actions of mortal men even in this life ; — those who were not addicted to vice, but were purified by their virtues, he recognised to be the favourites of God, to be always under the guardian care of angels, with whom they were joined by the twofold bond of love and relationship. Those, on the other hand, who were under the yoke of sin, who were polluted by the dregs of life, were associated with the hostile spirit, which perpetually urged them to sin in word and deed : and when the sin was committed, great was the joy with which the adversary displayed it to the other evil spirits. When once man sinned, the demon was by no means disposed to relax his endeavours, to wait until the sin were repeated ; he displayed to his brother demons the vices most likely to tempt the sinner : the temptation was suddenly renewed ; and the success proclaimed with joy. Among other

earthly inhabitants, he perceived a certain damsel grinding at a mill; who, casting her eyes on a new ornamental spindle which lay near her, its beauty pleased her, and she stole it. At this sight the fiends, as if filled with great joy, related the fact to the whole community, which hailed her as a sinner and a thief. ‘And I also perceived the ghost of a certain brother, who had died a short time before, whom I had attended in his last illness, and whose funeral rites I had performed, — a ghost truly sorrowful. In dying he had desired me to request from his brother that a female slave, who belonged to them both, should be enfranchised for the good of his soul; but the brother was avaricious; the request was refused; and the ghost, deeply sighing, accused and reproached his unfaithful kinsman.’ And he also spoke of Ceolred, the Mercian king, who, at that time, was still in the body: this prince he perceived under the protection of a certain angelic shield, in opposition to the assaults of the demons; this shield appearing like a great open book. And the demons besought the angels to remove it, that they might exercise their pleasure on the king, to whom they imputed a multitude of horrid crimes, and whom they threatened with the severest torments in the lowest depths of hell — with torments eternal, such as his sins deserved. Then the angels, becoming unusually sad, said: ‘Alas, that this sinful man is no longer permitted to defend himself! that, on account of his evil doings, we can no longer aid him!’ and at the same time they removed the defence. Then the spirits of darkness, assembling from all parts, in number exceeding all the souls of men, proceeded, with immediate exultation, to afflict him with various unspeakable torments.”

The spirit of the monk which witnessed these strange scenes was at length ordered to revisit its body, and to communicate them to believers, especially to a priest named Bugga. The object of the communication was, that men might be terrified from the paths of sin, when they heard what torments awaited the impenitent, and what struggles took place even for a single soul between the spirits of light and those of darkness. Why Bugga was thus favoured above all other priests, is sufficiently intimated, — *qui jam plurimos annos, zonam ferream, circa lumbos suos, nullo hominum conscio, amore Domini cogente, habuerat.* As Ceolred immediately died, — as he was called away by the devil while feasting at his own table, — who could doubt that the vision was true?

Had not St. Boniface been wrapped in the most deplorable superstition; had not his simplicity been pitiable, he would not so easily have been the dupe of an impostor. When good men like him were the easy tools of the designing, we need not wonder that the knavery of some, and the credulity of others, should so lamentably abound.*

688 The next distinguished saint in the order of time, is
to *St. Ina*, king of the West Saxons. His life, however,
725. affords few materials for the gratification of curiosity. That he was always pious, may be inferred from the liberality with which he enriched the chief monasteries of the kingdom; and he founded that of Glastonbury†, one of the noblest structures of the Saxon times. Before him, his father, Cissa, had founded that of Abingdon; the equally magnificent one of St. Alban's was not called into existence until the reign of Offa, the king of Mercia. The object of Ina was sincere devotion; while that of Offa was remorse for the murder of Ethelbert, king of Anglia,—a deed of which he may be justly suspected. His reign was glorious, but towards its close it was troubled by domestic rebellion. Perceiving that his aged and enfeebled hands were ill fitted to preserve tranquillity among a lawless nobility, and still more influenced by deep religious feeling, Ina resigned his sceptre in a public assembly of his ecclesiastical and secular thanes, and resolved to end his days in fasting and prayer. In this resolution, he is said to have been urged by a stratagem of the queen Ethelberga, whose disposition was even more ascetic than his own. He had just given a splendid entertainment to his nobles and clergy: the following morning he and his queen left

* Winfridus, Epistola ad S. Eadburgam (in Magna Bibliotheca Patrum, tom. viii.). Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, A.D. 716. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo Sax.*, vol. ii. p. 479. See, also, the life of St. Boniface, in the *Acta Sanctorum of the Bollandists*, die Junii v.; and in Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.*, tom. iv.

† He rebuilt, rather than founded, the monastery of Glastonbury. A religious establishment evidently existed there in preceding times; but that it was built by Joseph of Arimathea, nobody will believe in these days. There seems to be no doubt that this magnificent place contained the bones of king Arthur.

the castle, apparently to make such a tour as the kings of those days were in the habit of making ; but in a few hours, at her earnest request, he was persuaded to return. What was his astonishment to find the castle a solitude : the costly furniture had been removed ; the hall was strewn with rubbish ; desolation appeared in every quarter ; and the very bed in which he and his consort had passed the preceding night, was occupied by a loathsome litter of swine. When his eyes rather than his tongue interrogated Ethelberga as to the object of her contrivance, she read him a moral lecture in the fashion of the schools, *De contemptu mundi* ; wondered how any one could be so blind as to place the slightest value on things so perishable ; dwelt on the fugitive nature of every human good ; and exhorted him to lay up a store of things which neither moths nor rust could corrupt, which thieves could not steal, which would avail them both when human splendours were rotting in their kindred dust. This is probably one of Malmesbury's fictions, or a tradition which he took care to embellish. The reasons we have before given will account for the abdication of Ina, without recurring to so bungling a stratagem. Both king and queen, bidding adieu to their country, hastened to Rome, where they lived in the strictest exercise of devotion ; the king supporting himself, we are told, by the labour of his hands. This is probably incorrect ; for another account tells us that he founded a school for the English youths who so frequently resorted to the eternal city, — a statement at variance with his reputed poverty. However this be, whether he lived as a devotee, or assumed the Benedictine habit, it is certain that his virtues were shining. He died in a year from his abdication ; nor did Ethelberga, the companion alike of his greatness and humility, the faithful solace of his declining days, long survive him.*

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. v. cap. 7. *Chronicon Saxonicum*, p. 52. Malmesbury, *De Regibus Anglorum*, lib. i. cap. 2. Bollandistæ, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Feb. vi. Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.*, tom. iii. p. 400, &c. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, an. 726. Alfordus, *Annales Eccles. Anglo-Sax.* (eodem anno).

600 Omitting St. Swithin, the bishop of Winchester
 to (862), with whom fable has more concern than real
 800. biography ; St. Ethelgiva, or Elgiva, daughter of Alfred
 the Great (896), whose fame did not travel far be-
 yond the precincts of the monastery in which she
 professed ; St. Grimbold, abbot of Winchester ; St.
 Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury ; St. Wulfir,
 bishop of Sherburn ; the venerable Turketel, abbot of
 Croyland, who restored that monastery after the de-
 vastations of the Danes ; and many other saints of the
 tenth century, we come to the celebrated *St. Odo*,
 archbishop of Canterbury. Before his time, however,
 a great change had taken place in the social condition of
 the Anglo-Saxons, and in the state of religion ; nor can
 either his life, or that of his more celebrated successor,
 St. Dunstan, be understood, until we learn the history,
 motive, and tendency of that change. Its causes were
 twofold, internal and external. 1. During a full cen-
 tury and a half after the death of St. Augustine, the
 church preserved much of its original fervour — most of
 the virtues which ought to adorn a Christian com-
 munity. To use the words of an able writer, “ Nations,
 like individuals, are subject to vicissitudes of exertion
 and depression. As long as the impulse communicated
 by the first missionaries continued, the Anglo-Saxon
 Christian submitted to every sacrifice, and embraced
 with eagerness the most arduous duties of religion.
 But after a certain period, the virtues which had so
 brilliantly illuminated the aurora of their church, began
 to disappear : with the extirpation of idolatry, the vigil-
 ance and zeal of the bishops were gradually relaxed ;
 and the spirit of devotion, which had formerly charac-
 terised the monks and clergy, insensibly evaporated in
 the sunshine of ease and prosperity. Even the love of
 science, which so often survives the sentiments of piety,
 was extinguished. Malmesbury laments, though he al-
 lows of some exceptions, that the knowledge of the
 Saxons was buried in the same grave with the venerable
 Bede ; and Alfred informs us that, among the more dis-

tant successors of that learned monk, few were able, if they had been willing, to understand the numerous authors that slept undisturbed in the tranquillity of their libraries. This degeneracy of his countrymen was remarked and lamented by Alcuin."* This is a sufficiently melancholy picture: its shadows might be more darkened without violating historic truth. To produce this degeneracy there were causes enough at work. The chief was, doubtless, the decline of original fervour; the riches which the church held out to avarice, the power which she displayed to ambition, were no less fatal. They have been so in all countries; nor was there any thing in the moral constitution of the Saxons to exempt them from the usual effects of such causes. In the infancy of the Saxon church, two orders divided among themselves the ministry of religion — the clergy, and the monks. For a time both co-operated in the common duty of converting and instructing the people; but rivalry at length disunited them, and, in some parts of the kingdom, rendered them absolutely hostile to each other. The monks which St. Augustine had brought with him from Italy, he placed in a monastery in the city of Canterbury; while to the secular clergy who had joined him in Gaul he confided the public ordinances of religion in the new cathedral. Soon after the death of this apostle of England, a dispute is believed to have embroiled the two orders of ecclesiastics. It is certain that the seculars regarded with marked displeasure the efforts of the regulars to participate in the administration of the sacraments, and in public preaching. But the seculars had for some time much of the monastic polity: as *canons*, they lived in communities, subject to a rule. Adjoining every cathedral was a spacious building, in which the bishop lived with his clergy, in which hospitality was exercised, and youth instructed. But though their actions, even the minutest, were thus regulated, they differed widely from the monks in the number and nature

* Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 359.

of the offices they were compelled to celebrate, and in the power each individual possessed over his own property: the secular canon could dispose of it as he pleased; the monk had nothing he could call his own.— So long as the clergy thus lived in community, caused by the presence of the bishop, and kept in decorum by the sight of one another, their conduct was exemplary. From their cathedral they proceeded in bodies throughout the diocese to fulfil their functions. But this missionary policy was insufficient: several parts of the country were long without the benefits of instruction, which depended on the periodical perambulations of the community. It was now evident that, unless each district had a resident clergyman,—one who should be ready at every call,—no permanent good could be effected. By Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, the plan of dividing each diocese into a convenient number of parishes is said to have been devised; but it was not fully carried into effect until the time of Theodore. The thanes were not slow to erect and endow local churches, especially as in the family of each founder was vested the right of presentation to the benefice. But—and here we revert to the peculiar subject of this paragraph—this isolation of the clergy was not favourable to their learning or their morals. From their education, indeed, in the episcopal monastery; from the fervour of infant zeal; from the control of provincial synods, which were regularly held; from the frequent visits of the diocesan, their conduct continued for some time exemplary; but with them, as with every body else similarly circumstanced, the absence of a responsible authority had its inevitable effect. Removed from the salutary contact of their diocesans; unrestrained by that decorum which governs men in community; in constant intercourse with their flocks—they ceased to be models of imitation: they had no longer the resistance or the learning necessary to adorn the sacerdotal state. Again, the perpetual wars in which the states of the polyarchy were involved, could not fail to exercise over religion an in-

fluence quite as baneful as it did over law and morals. That the monastic orders had degenerated with almost equal rapidity, is no less certain. One cause of this is to be found in the fact, that the same establishment was double,—that is, it contained both male and female recluses; and the proximity of the sexes could not fail to be dangerous. St. Hilda appears to have been the first in England who governed a community of monks simultaneously with one of nuns:—

“The reader will perhaps have been surprised that a society of men should be subject to the spiritual government of a woman. Yet this scheme of monastic polity, singular as it may now appear, was once adopted in most Christian countries. Its origin may be ascribed to the severity with which the founders of religious orders have always prohibited every species of unnecessary intercourse between their female disciples and persons of the other sex. To prevent it entirely was impracticable. The functions of the sacred ministry had always been the exclusive privilege of the men; and they alone were able to support the fatigues of husbandry, and conduct the extensive estates which many convents had received from the piety of their benefactors. But it was conceived that the difficulty might be diminished, if it could not be removed; and, with this view, some monastic legislators devised the plan of establishing double monasteries. In the vicinity of the edifice destined to receive the virgins who had dedicated their chastity to God was erected a building for the residence of a society of monks or canons; whose duty it was to officiate at the altar, and to superintend the external economy of the community. The mortified and religious life, to which they had bound themselves by the most solemn engagements, was supposed to render them superior to temptation: and to remove even the suspicion of evil, they were strictly forbidden to enter the enclosure of the women, except on particular occasions, with the permission of the superior, and in the presence of witnesses. But the abbeſs retained the supreme control over the monks as well as the nuns: their prior depended on her choice, and was bound to regulate his conduct by her instructions. To St. Columban (Columbanus) this institution was indebted for its propagation in France; and from the houses of his order, which were long the favourite resort of the Saxon ladies, it was probably introduced into England. During the two first centuries after the conversion of our ancestors, the principal mo-

nasteries were established on this plan; nor are we certain that there existed any others of a different description." *

That this monastic polity prevailed in other countries, is evident from the *Memoriale Sanctorum* of St. Eulogius †, and still more so from the foundation of Pontevraud by Robert of Arbrissel, who, we have seen in the preceding volume, subjected his establishment to the government of a woman.‡ The example of the monks and nuns of Coldingham proved how dangerous is this contiguity of the sexes; in a few words, evidently with great reluctance, Bede describes the disorders of that establishment.§ The monastery being destroyed by an accidental fire, which he represents as a divine judgment, sufficiently exposed the guilt of the inmates. In the bitterness of his anger with both sexes, St. Cuthbert no sooner heard of the melancholy disclosure, than he commanded his disciples to exclude every female from the threshold of his cathedral,—a command which was religiously obeyed, not in Lindisfarne only, but at Chester-le-Street and Durham. And this is the only instance of the kind which antiquity has left on record; but there were doubtless others which have fortunately perished.—Another cause of monastic decline was the wealth of the great religious houses. In the two preceding volumes we have seen how anxious the founders or legislators of such houses were to exclude, not merely the comforts, but what we should consider the necessities of life,—that by some, manual labour—that by all, the coarsest diet was enjoined. But time, and no

* Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 120.

† *Cab. Cyc., History of Spain and Portugal*, vol. iv. p. 300.

‡ Vol. II. p. 291, 292. of the present work.

§ "Si quidem modo (it is an angel who speaks to a monk) totum hoc monasterium ex ordine perlustrans, singulorum casas et lectos inspexi, et neminem ex omnibus præter te erga sanitatem animæ suæ occupatum reperi; sed omnes prorsus et viri et feminae aut somno torpent inertes, aut ad peccata vigilant. Nam et domunculæ quæ ad orandum vel legendum factæ erant nunc in communione, potationum, fabulationum, et cæterorum sunt inlecebrarum et omnia conversæ. Virgines quoque Deo dicatæ, contempta reverentia suæ professionis, quotiescunque vacant, texendis subtilioribus indumentis operam dant, quibus aut s ipsas ad vicem sponsarum in periculum sui status adornent, aut externi sibi virorum amicitiam comparent."

long time, cooled the fervour of infant zeal : as benefactions or collections multiplied, comforts were introduced, then conveniences, then luxuries. Though England had no foundation so rich as St. Martin of Tours, or Fulda, or Corbey, or Clugny, yet that of Glastonbury was enormously endowed : when a survey was made of its property by order of a Mercian king, it was found to possess 800 hides, near 100,000 acres ; and this, be it remembered, was independent of the vast aggregate formed by the oblations of the faithful.

“ Yet the profession of poverty was not resigned. By the aid of an ingenious, though not unfounded, distinction, it was discovered that it might still subsist in the bosom of riches ; and that each individual might be destitute of property, though the wealth of the community was equal to that of its most opulent neighbours. Monastic property was defined to consist in the abdication of *private* property ; whatever the convent possessed, was common to all its members ; no individual could advance a claim in preference to his brethren ; and every article, both of convenience and necessity, was received at the hands, and surrendered to the command, of the abbot. These notions the Saxon monks received from their instructors. To refuse the donations of their friends, would have been to injure the prosperity of their brotherhood ; and each year conducted new streams of wealth to the more celebrated monasteries. Many, indeed, were left to languish in want and obscurity ; but there were also many whose superior riches excited the envy of the covetous, and the rapacity of the powerful.” *

This distinction between wealth in common and poverty in individuals may be ingenious enough ; but it is not solid. Human nature is ever the same : wealth *will* corrupt wherever it is admitted. As their revenues increased, the monks relaxed in their discipline, fared more sumptuously, were clad in more costly garments, were more attached to the world, and were less distinguished for the severe virtues than for the pride which prosperity necessarily engenders. Another abuse much less known to the general reader, we record in the words of the same judicious and eloquent writer.

* Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 131.

“ The estates of the monks, like those of the clergy, were liberated from all secular services ; and the hope of participating in so valuable a privilege gave occasion to a singular species of fraud, which cast a temporary, but unmerited, stain on the reputation of the order. We learn from Bede that, in the reign of Aldfrid (Alfred), king of Northumbria, certain nobles had expressed an ardent desire to consecrate their property to the service of religion. By the influence of friends and parents, the consent of the sovereign was obtained ; and the ecclesiastical privileges were confirmed to them by ample charters, subscribed by the signatures of the king, the bishops, and the principal thanes. But their secret motives were betrayed by the sequel of their conduct ; and the advantages, not the virtues, of the profession proved to be the object of their pursuit. They quitted not the habits nor the pleasures of a secular life ; but were content to assume the title of abbots, and to collect, on some part of their domain, a society of profligate and apostate monks. The wife also was found to copy the example of her husband ; and her vanity was flattered with the power of legislating for a sisterhood as ignorant and dissipated as herself. The success of the first adventurers stimulated the industry of others. Each succeeding favourite was careful to procure a similar charter for his family ; and so universal was the desire, that the venerable Bede ventured to express a doubt whether, in a few years, there would remain a soldier to draw the sword against an invading enemy. That respectable priest, in the close of his ecclesiastical history, dedicated to king Ceolwulf, hints, in respectful terms, his opinion of these nominal monks ; but, in his letter to archbishop Egbert, he assumes a bolder tone, and, in the language of zeal and detestation, insists on the necessity of putting a speedy end to so infamous a practice. But the secular abbots were numerous and powerful, and existed in other kingdoms no less than in that of Northumbria. It was in vain that Bede denounced them to the metropolitan, and that the synod of Cloveshoe attributed their origin to avarice and tyranny : they survived the censures of the monk and the condemnation of the synod ; their monasteries were inherited by their descendants ; and for their extirpation the Saxon church was indebted to the devastations of the pagan Danes in the succeeding century.”*

The preceding observations will sufficiently account for the rapid decline of religion, alike in the secular and monastic order. in the laity not less than in the

* Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 123. Alcuin, *Epistolæ ad Varios*, Ep. 28, 29. 32. 49, 50.

clergy, down to the close of the eighth century. Zeal evaporated; social anarchy introduced; the clergy removed from a salutary superintendence; the monks brought into contact with the other sex; the augmentation of wealth in both orders; the establishment of secular monasteries;—these and some minor causes, which the judicious reader may easily divine, had a fatal influence on the nation: that nation stood in need of chastisement, which, if insufficient to effect the moral regeneration of the whole, would, at least, preserve a chosen few from contamination.*

II. The signal chastisement to which we allude — 793
the invasions of the Northmen — involves the external to
causes which hastened the decline of the Anglo-Saxon 900.
church. For ages these savage pirates had infested the shores of the Baltic: as early as the seventh century they seem to have visited the islands bordering Britain, occasionally extending their depredations into the interior both of Scotland and Ireland: in the eighth, they appeared in more formidable numbers. For a time, however, they were satisfied with the booty they almost unresistingly seized. To their ravages in the maritime and even inland kingdoms of this island we have already adverted, as far as our limits will allow. The mischiefs which they inflicted on churches and monasteries must now be briefly noticed. Their first descent appears to have been made in the island of Lindisfarne, in 793. The church which contained the rich oblations of the faithful to the shrine of St. Cuthbert could not fail to attract their avidity. They landed, massacred the ecclesiastics, defiled the altars, plundered the sacred edifice, and at last consumed it by fire. Nor were the lazy inhabitants more fortunate: many were

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. iv. et v. (variis capitibus.) Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ben. in Præfationibus ad diversos tomos.* Wilkins, *Concilia Magnæ Britannię*, tom. i. p. 95. *Concilium Cloveshoviense*, can. v. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesię Anglo-Sax.* (sub annis). Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (ubi suprà).

If this last excellent work could be cleared from a portion of its controversial character, it would be much more acceptable. It abounds with erudition; and for calmness, no less than acuteness of judgment, it has scarcely an equal in the whole range of ecclesiastical history

put to death ; the women were violated ; the children either destroyed or led into captivity. In a few months the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow shared the same fate ; though the inhabitants had the consolation to see that the pirates either perished in the sea, or were cast by the storm on the shore, where they met with as little mercy as they deserved. Their ravages were continued during a period of seventy years, on a scale which, though desultory and minute, was sufficiently harassing and even destructive. On the line of coast from the Tweed to the Humber, monastery after monastery, church after church, felt their rage ; and all the ecclesiastics that could be reached were mercilessly sacrificed. The fate, however, of the brethren at Lindisfarne, which had spread consternation throughout Europe, made the latter eager to escape by flight the destiny intended for them.* About the middle of the ninth century, they appeared in such numbers as to threaten the existence of the Saxon kingdoms. The depredations of Regnar Lodbrog, one of the most famous of their chiefs, have obtained him a painful immortality in our annals. After many successful exploits on various coasts, he landed on that of Northumbria ; and though his forces had been reduced by a shipwreck, he did not hesitate to meet Ella, the usurping monarch of Deira. His handful of followers, however, found a grave or captivity ; and he himself fell into the hands of the victors. He is said to have been stung to death by serpents ; and to have composed, amidst his lingering torments, the celebrated song still ascribed to him. Both circumstances are improbable. Had his end been so extraordinary, it would not have escaped the notice of our writers. With that contempt of death which characterised the fierce Vikingyr, he may have sung amidst his expiring pains ; for the Indians of North America do the same : but who was present to record his strains ? who carried them into Denmark ? The serpents and the song are, doubt-

* A minute account of these voyages may be found in Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, vols. i. and ii., under the proper years.

less, the inventions of the northern scalds. But this, however, is certain, that his numerous sons vowed to revenge his death, and arrived off the English coast in the most formidable fleet, that had ever left the north. In the battle which ensued, Ella fell into the hands of Regnar's sons, and perished in torments as severe as those which he had inflicted on the father. All Northumbria now lay open to the ravages of the Northmen. The abbey of Tynemouth was reduced to ashes ; that of Lindisfarne, which had been restored, shared the same fate : yet the monks contrived to escape with the relics of St. Cuthbert. One of these sons, Haldene, hastened from the smoking ruins of Lindisfarne to the monastery of Coldingham. According to Matthew of Westminster, and succeeding writers, the nuns of Coldingham nobly redeemed the reputation of their establishment from the stain which had covered it in the time of St. Cuthbert. The monastery was now, as in the former case, governed by an abbess, named Ebba ; who, if the historian be credible, deserves the honours of canonisation somewhat better than her predecessor. Hearing that it was the custom of the barbarians first to violate, and then to destroy, virgins consecrated to God, she assembled the sisterhood in the chapter house, and exhorted them to save their chastity at the expense of their beauty. With a knife she dreadfully disfigured her countenance ; and her example was followed on the spot by all the nuns. The Danes soon forced their gates ; but turned with horror from their embraces, and quickly consumed both them and their nunnery. Though the monk of Westminster lived so long after the time, he might follow some better guide than tradition—some record now lost ; nor is the fact itself either improbable or unparalleled. The same noble conduct is related of the nuns of Ecijsa, during the Mohammedan invasion of Spain.* During seven years

* See History of Spain and Portugal, vol. i. book ii. Mr. Turner,* we know not on what authority, relates the same anecdote of the nuns of Ely. History of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 526.

similar depredations followed throughout most of Northumbria. Wherever the Danes penetrated, ecclesiastics were massacred, churches and monasteries were levelled with the ground ; the whole country, in fact, became a Danish province, governed by princes of the royal house of that kingdom. Great as was the evil produced by these merciless pagans ; though the monks as an order were almost wholly annihilated, and civilisation was destroyed, yet the invasion itself led to the conversion of the invaders. Resolved to remain in the country which they had conquered, to cultivate the lands which they had divided among themselves, they were compelled to enter into relations of amity with the inhabitants, from whose example, or by whose persuasion, they soon embraced the faith of Christ. That the Danish princes were soon no less devout than their Saxon brothers, appears from the splendid donation of all the country between the Wear and the Tyne, made by Guthred to the cathedral of St. Cuthbert, now transferred to Chester-le-Street.—While this province was thus devastated by Halfdene, other parts of the kingdom were visited by detachments from the same vast armament. Crossing the Humber, the invaders destroyed the abbey of Bardney. In the country of the Girvii, indeed, they received a momentary check ; but this only stimulated their hopes of revenge. On every side conflagrations announced their approach towards the devoted monastery of Croyland. It was midnight : the abbot Theodore and his monks had risen to matins when the enemy drew near : the younger brethren the abbot immediately commanded to seek a place of refuge with their papers, relics, and jewels ; while he himself, accompanied by the more aged monks, and some children, awaited whatever fate might be reserved for them. Perhaps he hoped that the grey locks of some, and the infancy of others, might awaken pity even in pagans. But they forgot, says Ingulf, the old verse,

“ Nulla fides pietasque viris qui castra sequuntur.”

But he was prepared for any event,—to live or fall with his establishment. Having taken an affectionate leave of about thirty junior monks, he and his devoted companions returned to the church, finished the matins, and celebrated mass. They had just communicated when the pagans arrived, forced the gates, and rushed into the cloisters. The silence which they found might have induced them to believe the monastery was utterly forsaken, had not the distant chaunting of the monks fallen on their ears. They hastened to the church, and burst into the choir: one chieftain instantly seized the abbot by the hair with his left hand, while the right severed the head from the body. The officiating clergy shared the same fate at nearly the same moment: the children and the aged monks were tortured for the purpose of discovering whither the treasures had been conveyed; but as the former were unable, and the latter unwilling, to disclose the secret, their sufferings were soon terminated by death. Of all these helpless inmates, one only was saved,—a boy ten years old, whose innocence made an impression on one of the chieftains. He had fled to the refectory with the sub-prior, whom he saw murdered, and whose fate he begged to share; but the chieftain tore the cowl from his head, threw a Danish cloak over him, and commanded him to follow him. The three succeeding days were passed in plunder,—in minutely examining every corner or crevice where treasure might be buried. The shrine of St. Guthlake was overthrown; the marble monuments around it, containing the mortal remains of saints and benefactors to the house, were opened, in search of rings, chalices, and other precious effects which the Saxons entombed with the bodies of the great; the bones were thrown on the ground, and the sculpture defaced. On the fourth day the extensive pile was on fire. Medeshamstede, or Peterborough, also an abbey of royal foundation, was next visited. Its noble library; its numerous treasures, which there had not been time to remove; its magnificent architecture, ren-

dered it one of the proudest monastic establishments in the island. Within its gates many of the neighbouring inhabitants had placed their most valuable effects, and thither many had fled for protection. For a while the edifice made a noble stand ; but a stone thrown by an unknown hand having mortally wounded the brother of Ubbo, the Danish king, the barbarian and his followers made a more desperate attack, forced the gates, and commenced the massacre. With his own hand Ubbo sacrificed the hoary abbot and eighty-three monks to the shade of his brother ; while the strangers fell under the hands of his followers. The booty was immense ; but the value was trifling compared with that of the MS. treasures which were consumed with the monastery. The conflagration continued a fortnight. While it raged, the monks who had fled from Croyland returned to their former abode, sat themselves down amidst the smoking ruins, and wept. So overcome were they by the melancholy sight, that some time elapsed before they proceeded to bury the scorched bodies of their brethren. Having performed this sad office, and elected another abbot, they were solicited to perform the last duties to the monks of Medeshamstede. With sorrowful hearts they deposited the bones of the abbot and the eighty-three monks in the same grave, over which Godric, their superior, raised a monument, engraven with the history of this sad tragedy. From Medeshamstede the pirates, exulting in their success, hastened to the Isle of Ely, to inflict the same fate on the flourishing convent which had been founded by the piety of St. Edilthryda. Its cloisters were inhabited by the noblest ladies of England. Some fled ; but the greater number preferred the death which they knew awaited them. The place was taken ; the nuns were ravished and slaughtered ; and the holy pile was reduced to ashes.*

* Simeon Dunelmensis, *Historia de Dunlensi Ecclesia*, lib. ii. cap. 12. et 13. necnon *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (apud Twysden, *Decem Scriptores*, p. 123, &c.). Ingulfus Croylandensis, *Historia*, p. 20, &c. Thomas

The preceding are a few of the cases which we have selected to illustrate the dreadful depredations of the most savage people that ever invaded a country. We have seen how Alfred himself, after vainly attempting to remove them by money, threw down his sceptre, and fled, for personal safety, into the Isle of Ethelingey.* In the end, indeed, he so far triumphed, as to make the Northmen not only sue for peace but receive baptism; but how were the wounds to be healed, which, during so many years, had been inflicted on the English? The moral state of the country is described in colours truly revolting; that the description is not exaggerated, is evident from the laws of the period, — a testimony which no sophistry can weaken. By a distinguished historian, whose attention has been exclusively devoted to the state of the Anglo-Saxon church, and the truth of whose observations we have often been able to verify by a reference to the original sources of information, three facts have been abundantly proved, — that the laity had resumed the ferocity of their heathen forefathers; that the clergy were dissolute and illiterate; that the monastic order was nearly annihilated.† 1. That the population had been lamentably thinned by the ravages of the barbarians, is clear from several facts. In East Anglia, the number of Danes far exceeded that of natives: in the great province of Northumbria, the disproportion was nearly as great: while in others, where the foreigners had not settled, the busy hum of rural occupations had been succeeded by silence and desolation. It was the favourite, but injudicious, policy of Alfred, to introduce colonies of the now submissive barbarians into the most desert parts of the country, to promote marriages between them and the Saxons. That the policy was injudicious was proved by the sequel;

800
to
950.

Eliensis, *Historia Eliensis*, p. 602. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, necnon Alfordus, *Annales Eccles. Anglo-Sax.* tom. iii. (sub annis). Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 364—376. The Scandinavian authorities for these ravages may be seen in Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. ii.

* See page 21. of the present volume.

† Lingard *Antiquities*, p. 377, &c.

and by ordinary foresight it might have been predicted to be so. The Northmen had but just been baptised ; they were still unacquainted with the spirit of Christianity ; their minds were still impressed with the superstitions of the faith they had nominally discarded ; they still obstinately clung to their ancient magical rites ; and, in many places, if the religion of Odin was not openly encouraged, it was clandestinely preserved ; nor could the punishments inflicted by the ecclesiastical law, or the oaths of future abstinence from idolatry, prevent its partial restoration. The intercourse of such converts was not likely to raise the standard of religion among the natives, whose conduct had long degenerated, until it had become almost as vicious as that of the strangers. That the laws were despised ; that brute force prevailed every where over justice ; that the public roads were infested by banditti ; that men put away their wives with as much indifference as their servants ; that incestuous connections were frequent ; that industry was at a stand, the national prosperity engulfed in ruin, are inferences which we may draw from every page of contemporary authors. Hence the severity of the laws which, after his restoration *, king Alfred promulgated ; hence the rigour with which he chastised those intrusted with their administration. Whether he hanged so many as forty-four judges in one year, as is asserted by a writer of the Plantagenet times, we know not ; but if even the statement be exaggerated, the exaggeration itself sufficiently proves the fact of general corruption. 2. The ignorance and dissolute lives of all men, clergy and laity, are well attested. The celebrated epistle of Alfred, in which he asserts, that at his accession very few north of the Humber, and not one south of the Thames, were capable of translating Latin into the vulgar tongue, is well known ; yet this was the island to which, as he justly observed, foreigners ever flocked for wisdom and learning. To dispel the darkness which shrouded in its thick impenetrable folds the intellect of the nation, teachers were

* See page 71. of the present volume.

procured from France, Germany, and Belgium. That clerical morals were not more favourable, is no less certain. There was no longer any discipline ; the provincial synods could no longer be held ; indeed, few of the higher clergy had survived the massacres of the Danes ; and those who did survive appear to have been absorbed by the general vortex of licentiousness : the best of them, it may be truly said, held the reins of ecclesiastical correction with so feeble a hand, that as superintendents of God's church they were become wholly inefficient. The destruction of the monasteries, in which the cathedral clergy no less than the monks passed their lives, was one of the most fatal disasters of the times. The members of these confraternities, being forced to seek a home, naturally repaired to the houses of their kindred and friends, and were soon constrained by the vices of their age. On the restoration of tranquillity, indeed, the canons were recalled to their communal life ; but some disobeyed the call ; and, of those who complied with it, the greater portion returned with habits little suited to their state. Some appeared, indeed, in the choir, to assist in the service of religion ; but, this duty performed, they returned, not to their monasteries, but to their private houses. Others, again, refused to appear at all, except by deputies ; yet these, like those we have just described, were careful to divide with the rest the revenues attached to their benefices. That many were openly married is indisputable. This fact has given rise to bitter controversy between certain parties : one contending that such marriages were in perfect accordance with the ancient discipline of the church ; another, that they were always unlawful, even from the apostolic times. Both are wrong. Of married ecclesiastics we certainly read in the early periods of church history ; but what was their grade in the hierarchy ? That the inferior clergy — deacons, subdeacons, lectors, acolytes, — had wives, is beyond dispute ; for we are expressly assured that they were at liberty to marry *once, with a virgin*. But of a married *bishop* — that is, of one who lived with his

wife — we have not a single record in all antiquity. Whether priests in full orders — the ministers on whom exclusively devolved the administration of the sacraments — were thus indulged, is doubtful, even among the best informed of the Roman catholics. Some, like cardinal Lorenzana and Masdeu, contend that they were. This question can never, perhaps, be decided. We are by no means sure that the discipline of one church, in this respect, was that of all. On a former occasion we have expressed an opinion, that in the church of Spain presbyters were at all times forbidden to cohabit with their wives.* Whether the same prohibition extended to the church universal is the difficulty, — a difficulty apparently insuperable.† An argument in favour of priestly marriages had been drawn from the practices of the Greek church, which, as is well known, allows even the pastor of a parish to marry once, with a virgin, but compels every one who accepts the dignity of archimandrite or bishop to separate for ever from the partner of his bed. This argument is very specious; it may even be just; for in many things the discipline of that church is more nearly allied than the Roman catholic to the usages of the primitive times. One, however, who holds in his impartial hands the scales of historic justice, may require some degree of evidence to show that the present custom of the Greek church, ancient as it may be proved, is the legitimate descendant of the apostolic ages. However this be, one thing is certain, — that in the fourth century, at least, no married ecclesiastic could be promoted in the hierarchy unless both he and his wife consented to a final separation. This fact is not only proved by the canons of councils, but by the care with which the ancient bishops confined the wives of ecclesiastics to cer-

* See History of Spain and Portugal, vol. i. book i. chap. ii.

† Lingard (*Antiquities*, p. 100) throws his weight into the scale in favour of clerical marriages during the earliest periods of the church. Many other Roman catholic writers are of the same opinion; while some candid protestants incline to the opposite one, of celibacy being obligatory on priests and bishops long before the fourth century.

tain houses, where they lived *as widows*, in community, and under the superintendence of some aged priest. Great are the penalties decreed by the canons on such clergymen as ventured, after this voluntary separation, to renew their intercourse with their wives. This was the discipline of the fourth century; in the fifth and sixth, the ecclesiastic, even in minor orders, who presumed to marry, was degraded and excommunicated, his children being declared illegitimate. Was this also as much the practice of the Saxon, as it was of the universal church? To begin with the earliest period, there is a letter from St. Gregory the Great to St. Augustine, in which that pontiff allows clerks, who cannot contain themselves, to marry. But then these clerks were defined to be "*extra sacras ordines constituti*;" in other words, men who were not allowed to officiate at the altar, who performed the inferior duties, and swelled the pomp of public worship, but who, in strict language, were not a part of the priesthood, though that priesthood was taken from their ranks: they were merely candidates for it, and they had to rise through several subordinate degrees before they were admitted to the administration of the sacraments.* This is not all: we have reason to infer that even this reluctant concession was a dispensation from the established discipline; that it was an indulgence granted to the weakness of an infant church, to the prejudices of new converts. If our limits permitted us to enter at length into a subject which we rather consider as a digression, we should be at no loss to prove, from the canons of councils during the fourth and fifth centuries, that clerks, even in minor orders, were not only forbidden to marry, but were commanded either to separate from their wives, or to forego their clerical character. Why should the pope concede to England a privilege denied to other churches, unless for the reason we have suggested?

* For the orders of the hierarchy, their character and duties, we again refer to the same chapter in the *History of Spain and Portugal*. See also p. 309. of the present volume.

In other things, as we have shown at some length *, he did not hesitate, where good seemed likely to ensue, to dispense with the strict letter of the canons ; and we believe he did so in this. The very terms in which St. Augustine propounds the question shows that he knew the practice of the church universal ; but that he wished to know whether, in this respect, he was to enforce the observance of the canons : — “*Opto enim doceri an clerici continere non valentes, possint contrahere ? Et si contraxerint, an debeant ad sæculum redire ?*” After St. Augustine’s death, there is evidence enough to show that clerical celibacy was rigorously exacted. Thus, Ceolfred, abbot of Weremouth, says, that clergymen must be held in stricter bonds than others — that they must crucify the desires of the flesh. Thus Bede asserts, that whoever does not refrain “*ab appetitu copulæ conjugalis*” can neither receive priestly orders nor be consecrated to the ministry of the altar. Thus Egbert archbishop of York expressly enjoins “*sacerdotes — nequaquam uxores ducent.*” Nay, in the Excerpta of the same prelate, we find this strange prohibition, “*ut nullus sacerdos extranearum mulierum habeat familiaritatem, nec in suâ domo in quâ ipse habitat ullam mulierem unquam permittat habitare.*” That the prohibition is continued and confirmed by several canons of councils, may be seen by any one who will take the trouble to look into the collection of Wilkins. Whoever, with an unbiassed mind, will peruse our venerable monuments of antiquity, will feel no little surprise at many statements in modern writers. When he is told that celibacy was not enjoined until the tenth century ; that bishops and parochial clergy had their wives without intermission during five ages after the arrival of Augustine ; that even the monks, who lived in community, were merely secular^d priests, with the option of marrying or not, at their pleasure, he may either pity the ignorance, or execrate the impudence, of men who coolly advance

* See page 157. of the present volume.

statements, not only without the shadow of authority, but diametrically opposed to it. During the melancholy period, indeed, under consideration, — when law and discipline were alike disregarded, — we find that such marriages existed — not in the bishops, but certainly in the parochial clergy. In vain, however, throughout the whole range of Anglo-Saxon history, would he look for them at any other time. 3. The monastic institute exhibited an appearance deplorable as that of the secular clergy. Most of the religious houses perished in the flames; of those which escaped, the revenues were seized by the sovereigns. The inmates thus expelled, who were forced to live in the world, were not likely to preserve the virtues of retirement. That the state had fallen into disrepute, is evident from Asser, the biographer of Alfred, who tells us that when that prince, after his restoration, endeavoured also to restore the institute, he could scarcely find one individual willing to embrace its self-denying obligations. Alfred, however, persevered: he rebuilt some monasteries, and filled them with monks from Gaul; yet we have little reason to infer that his efforts to introduce settled habits of devotion were successful. In the monastery of Ethelney, a foundation endeared to him by his retreat, the monks were so incensed with their abbot, for attempting to enforce the observance of the rule, that they murdered him before the altar. In regard to nunneries, the monarch was more fortunate. Over his foundation of Shaftesbury he placed his daughter Ethelgiva; and after his death his widowed consort, Alfwitha, repaired to that of Winchester. His grand-daughter, St. Eadberga, abbess of the latter convent, was distinguished for piety, in an age when religion was held in little esteem. But though some communities of nuns continued from time to time to adorn the profession, there were few, if any, of monks remaining on the accession of king Edgar. This fact, which we have from his own words, and which is confirmed by contemporary authorities, when considered in connection with the universal corruption of the clergy,

will account for the policy of Odo, Dunstan, Ethelwald, Oswald, and other saints of the tenth century.*

890 The time of St. Odo's birth can only be conjectured ;
 to but it was in Alfred's reign. A more important fact is,
 961. that he was of Danish extraction ; and that his father,
 a chief of that nation in East Anglia, was still a pagan.
 The youth, however, soon inclined his steps to the
 Christian church, in opposition to his parent's commands ;
 and by so doing incurred the loss of his inheritance.
 This severe blow did not discourage him ; on the con-
 trary, he rejoiced that he had an opportunity of suffering
 for the faith which he was resolved to embrace. In
 conformity with the manners of the times, he hastened
 to place himself under the protection, perhaps to engage
 in the military service, of a certain thane named Adelm,
 in high esteem among the Saxons, and powerful at court.
 By Adelm his zeal was praised ; his sacrifice of splen-
 dour to conscience—for his father was of noble blood—
 was admired ; and still more applauded was that strength
 of principle so uncommon in any one, above all in a youth.
 Struck with these circumstances, Adelm took him under
 his protection, and wisely turned his attention from the
 career of arms to that of religion. Placed under the
 care of able ecclesiastics, he is said, by his first bio-
 grapher, Osbern,—if, indeed, Osbern, and not Eadmer,
 be the writer of his life,—to have made great progress
 in Greek no less than in Latin. “ Factus quoque in
 utraque linguâ valde gnarus ; ita ut posset poemata
 fingere, prosam continuare, et omnino quicquid ei animo
 sederet, luculentissimo sermone proferre.” After these
 things, says Osbern, being regenerated in the waters of
 baptism †, and adorned with the clerical tonsure, through

* *Chronicon Saxonicum*, sub annis. Asserius Menevensis, *Vita Ælfredi*, passim. Fludoardes, *Historia Ecclesiæ Rhemigiensis*, lib. iv. cap. 5. *Leges Anglo-Saxonica*, apud Wilkins, p. 28—64. passim. Ingulfus Croylandensis, *Historia*, p. 38. Wilkins, *Concilia Magnæ Britanniæ*. Excerpta Egberti, tom. i. p. 107, &c. Loaisa, *Concilium Toletanum*, i. can. 1. S. Gregorius Magnus, *Responsiones ad S. Augustinum*, Resp. ii. apud Wilkins, *Concilia*, i. 19. Parker *De Antiquitate Ecclesiæ Britannicæ*, p. 75. Lingard's *Antiquities*, p. 68. &c. p. 377, &c. Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Sæculum v.* passim.

† *Post hæc sacramento baptismatis renatus.* Was not the rite adminis-

the persuasion of his patron, he proceeded to sub-deacon's orders. In this grade he remained some years, — wholly on account of his youth, since he had not reached the years appointed by the canons for the assumption of the higher orders, — remarkable no less for his integrity of life than for his *zealous preaching*.* Here we have an extraordinary incident. Did the sub-deacon, whose chief duty it was to hand at the altar the consecrated vessels to the deacon, really preach? In the earliest ages of the church this duty was the exclusive province of the bishop: we know of no instance before the sixth where it was devolved on presbyters; we know not of one, throughout the church universal, where it was delegated to a deacon, much less to an inferior ecclesiastic. If the biographer is not here writing loosely, either a custom existed in the Anglo-Saxon church unknown to any other, or, in the dearth of enlightened teachers, Odo, in consideration of his superior merit, must have been favoured with a dispensation from the canonical observance. That, in a still more important case, a dispensation *was* granted him, is evident from the fact of his soon afterwards receiving priest's orders, long before the canonical age.† Perhaps one reason of a journey to Rome, which he soon undertook in company with his patron, was to obtain the papal approbation for so extraordinary a step. During many years the conduct of Odo appears to have been highly exemplary: his fame for sanctity procured him the favour of several successive kings, — of Alfred, of Edward the Elder, and of Athelstane. By the last-

tered until he had learned Latin and Greek? Of necessity it was; but the phrase proves the looseness with which most writers of the period expressed themselves.

* In quo gradu per aliquot annos ita sanctitate v.tæ et prædicationis sinceritate pollebat, &c.

† Unde suus à domino suo (the thane his patron) ut ad sacerdotium se sinneret transferri, quatenus ab illo divinum quotidie officium audiret, cujus vitam castissimam, manus vere munditiæ plenas agnovisset, ille *objecta immaturâ ætate* quantum potuit obstitit. Again, we are told that all wished him to assume the higher orders, licet ætas ejus (quantum ad instituta canonum spectat) hoc prohiberet. These were strange days in the Saxon church: Odo must have been many years under the canonical age when he entered into priest's orders.

named sovereign he was advanced to the see of Sherburn; a dignity, however, which he at first declined, but which, through the entreaties of others, he unwillingly accepted. At the head of his vassals he accompanied Athelstane into the field against the Danes: we are told, however, that he did not fight; that, like the monks of Bangor, or like the prophet of old, he prayed at a distance.* He escaped the fate of the monks, for the English were victorious.† His favour with Edmund, Athelstane's successor, was no less remarkable. The death of archbishop Wilfelm enabled Edmund to offer the primacy to Odo; but the bishop refused on two grounds. He truly said, that the canons forbade translation from one see to another; and when silenced, rather than satisfied, by the fact that both Mellitus of London and Justus of Rochester had suffered themselves to be thus translated, he observed, that he was only a secular canon; that the primacy had, from the time of St. Augustine, been confined to monks; and that he would not infringe a custom sanctioned by so many holy men, and approved by heaven itself.‡ In the end, however, considering that to assume the monastic habit was no difficult matter, he consented; but before he would submit to consecration, he made his profession before the abbot of Fleury, who came to

* This fact is suppressed by Parker (*Antiquitates*, p. 77.), who would have us to believe that Odo was a very martial character.

† There is a romance about Anlaf's assuming the garb of a minstrel, and entering the English camp, to see where a midnight attack might be best made; that though dismissed with honour, he was recognised by one of the royal attendants, who advised Athelstane to remove his tent to some other part of the field; that the advice of the soldier was justified when, that very night, an assault being made on the place where the royal camp had been, the bishop of *Sherburn*, who now occupied it, fell. The bishop of Sherburn was St. Odo, who lived twenty-three years after the battle of Brunanburh. This legend well illustrates the carelessness of our historians, from William of Malmesbury to our own times. That fabulous monk is the first who mentions the romantic affair; and he is gravely followed by all our historians, not even excepting Langard, the most critical of all. Of this tale not a syllable is to be found in Osbern, or the Saxon Chronicle, or Eadmer, or Ingulf, except that this abbot of Croyland says, that a certain bishop was killed in a nocturnal attack, "*perempto quodam episcopo*." This hint, with the aid of old ballads, his chief authorities, was enough for Malmesbury.

‡ "*Quod tamen a veritate longe alienum est*," says Parker, with his usual boldness; but we prefer Odo's authority to his.

England purposely to receive him into the society of St. Benedict. From the picture which we have before drawn of the secular clergy, we may easily infer that Odo was averse to enter on a dignity which must necessarily be attended with so much anxiety, so much fatigue, so little prospect of good : he evidently distrusted his own powers to effect such a reformation as the state of religion required. His conduct as primate is praised in general terms ; but though obscure allusions are made to the reforms which he attempted, at least, if not executed, we are disappointed at the comparative silence respecting him. Is this owing to the caution with which he proceeded in his design, or to the fame of his successor, Dunstan, in the splendour of which his own is lost ? Probably to both. The objects which he appears to have had most at heart were the substitution of monastic fraternities for secular canons ; the extirpation of clerical marriages, which he regarded as concubinage ; and the enforcement of the dogma of transubstantiation. In these, at first, his success must have been very partial : in the first case, from the difficulty of procuring monks, where the institute was nearly extinguished ; in the second, from the formidable combined opposition he encountered. In the last he had probably more reason to congratulate himself ; for, if the dogma in question were not a received tenet in the Anglo-Saxon church, it is certain that the kindred one of the real presence had remained undisputed from the mission of St. Augustine. In other respects, the primate was as severe towards others as he was towards himself. The readiness with which, on the day of king Edwin's coronation, he authorised the abbot of Glastonbury, and bishop Kynsey, to intrude on the privacy of the king, has been already noticed * ; but if, as many writers believe, Elgiva was the mere mistress of Edwin, there was surely nothing objectionable in his sending the two ecclesiastics to remonstrate with the thoughtless debauchee. That Dunstan executed the

* See page 29. of the present volume.

commission with haughtiness, and even insult, is evident from the writers nearest to the period ; but for his violence on this occasion Odo is surely not to blame. Elgiva appears afterwards to have become the wife of Edwin* ; but as she stood—such at least appears to have been the fact—within the degrees of kindred to the king, the marriage could not be a valid one ; she still remained his mistress : the canons, which forbade such marriages, and the civil law, which confirmed such canons, might be objectionable, but still they were binding ; and we may add, that nobody in that age dreamed of denying their force. A still heavier charge, that, after branding and banishing Elgiva, he was implicated in her subsequent cruel fate, rests on no better foundation. It is, indeed, true, that the branding, with exile and death even, was sanctioned by the laws ; but this fact could not clear the memory of Odo from the curses of posterity, if he really participated in that most monstrous deed. That laymen both make and enforce inhuman laws is, unfortunately, common enough ; but the frequency of such enactments should not deaden our moral senses, so as to make us spare the authors. If we should execrate the savage deed for such a deed, what language ought we to use if it were authorised by a churchman ? But we do not believe that Odo had any part in this accursed transaction. It is, indeed, true that, according to Eadmer, the deed was perpetrated by the archbishop's men, "*ab hominibus servi Dei comprehensa*," but, in the life of St. Dunstan, he attributes it to the insurgents, then in arms against Edwin ; and this account is confirmed by Osbern. We are willing to rest the case even on the former relation ; but what proof is there that the primate authorised this damned deed, — that he was so much as consulted on the occasion ? The charge is so heavy, that, without the most explicit testimony, the guilt should be laid to the memory of no man, still less of such a

* We confess that a little more examination has taught us to doubt whether, at the time of his coronation, she was Edwin's wife. See p. 29.

man as Odo, whose character exhibits much that cannot fail to excite our admiration. To us the most disgusting part of the affair is the coolness with which it is related by the biographers of Odo and Dunstan: not one word of reprobation escapes their pens; they appear rather to approve it.—On the accession of Edgar, the influence of the primate, which had been weakened during the reign of Edwin, was again recognised at court. He employed it in procuring the recall of Dunstan the abbot, whom he consecrated bishop, and whom he evidently hoped to succeed him in the archiepiscopal see. He perceived that, of all the Saxon ecclesiastics, none were so proper to continue his reforms as the abbot of Glastonbury, whose genius he could not but admire, and whose strength of character he must have regarded as unequalled. In 961 he closed his career. Of his rigid morals, of his burning zeal, of the freedom with which he reproofed the great, in defiance of whom he defended the great interests of religion, his life affords sufficient proof. The mistresses of Edwin—for that unhappy king had several—he would not allow so much as to enter the church. This fact, coupled with his conduct to Edwin himself, proves, what his enemies cannot deny, that he was no respecter of persons. Of his pious solicitude for his flock, his letter to his suffragans is a sufficient illustration: he declares that, if all the riches of the world were his, he would freely distribute them, and add the sacrifice of his own life to ensure their salvation. He exhorts them to renewed diligence in the government of souls; not to be lukewarm in their holy and most responsible office, lest, at the day of judgment, they should be accused of having fed themselves rather than their flocks. “Let us provide Christ’s family, over which we have been appointed rulers, with food in due season—with wholesome doctrine.” Such exhortations he delivered, not in virtue of his own merits, of which he professed he had none, but in virtue of his being, however unworthy, the successor of apostolic men; and he invited *their* admonitions with the same

freedom he delivered his. That he was a wise and good man, cannot be doubted ; probably he was deficient in the more amiable graces of character : he made some enemies ; but yet this fact may be explained to his honour by the natural hypothesis, that hostility was provoked by the rigour with which he enforced the canons.*

924 With the same unbiassed spirit that has guided us in
to the sketch of Odo, we proceed to that of a more con-
988. troverted character, the celebrated *St. Dunstan*. On this subject we have not one earthly prejudice ; we care not for the collision between the monks and the seculars, or for that between modern Roman catholics and protestants, or for Dunstan himself. Our object is historic truth ; and when we think we have found it, we shall not hesitate to express it, at the risk of offending the polemics of either church, or of both.† Dunstan is, in one respect, more fortunate than his predecessor ; since his life has been written by one author (an anonymous priest) who was unquestionably contemporary, and by another (the monk Adelard) who was probably born soon after his death. Osbern, the third biographer, who wrote about a century after the death of Dunstan, had both lives before him, with other documents which appear, from his prologue, to have been Saxon translations from Latin originals lost in the great fire of Canterbury, A.D. 1070. Eadmer, in his preface to the life of the same saint, bears evidence to the existence of such translations ; and from an author whom he allows, was despised by many on account of his statements not har-

* Osbernus (verius Eadmerus), *De Vita S. Odonis*, p. 78, &c. (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii.) Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Bened. Sæculum v.* p. 287, &c. Bollandistæ, *Acta SS. die Julii 4.* Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Gestis Pontificum* (in *Vitis Odonis et Dunstani*). Parker, *Antiquitates Britan. Ecclesiæ*, p. 76, &c.

In this sketch we have wholly disregarded modern authorities, whether Roman catholic or protestant. Of the miracles recorded by ancient ones we have taken no notice : they are exceedingly puerile.

† We are the more anxious to do justice to Dunstan's memory, from the ill-feeling we have always borne him ; a feeling derived from early prejudice. It is high time for the empire of such prejudice to expire. Stern impartiality must guide the historian, or his labours are most mischievous : it would be his duty to vindicate even the devil, if he had reason to believe that personage calumniated.

monising with vulgar history. Evidently both Osbern and Eadmer followed the same treacherous guides, in addition to the anonymous priest and Adelard. The first authority, as far as it goes, that of the anonymous priest, we shall, as sound criticism demands, make the basis of the present sketch.—Dunstan was born in Wessex, about the time of Athelstane's accession: his lineage was noble, and he was early taken to the church of Glastonbury, then served by Irish ecclesiastics, who were attached to the place from the belief that it contained the bones of St. Patrick the younger, nephew of the great Hibernian apostle. Soon after his arrival, he dreamed that a venerable old man, clad in white garments, appeared to him, led him round the edifice, and traced the limits of a monastery which he was afterwards to build. In this dream there is nothing improbable; but perhaps it was made after the event. Endowed with a high degree of natural genius, Dunstan applied so vigorously to his studies as to outstep all his school companions. Seeing his great proficiency, his parents wished him to embrace the ecclesiastical state. But if his earliest biographer is to be credited, he was favoured by Heaven with more gifts than that of genius. During an attack of fever, while labouring under the delirium so common in the severer forms of that malady, at a moment when his nurse thought him too weak to move; when

“*Ut velut exanimis jacuisset ad ultima stratus;*”

he suddenly rose, seized a staff, and ran into the mountains, striking right and left, in the fancy that he was assailed by mad dogs. At night he returned to the church, the roof of which happened to be under repair; ascended the scaffolding, a feat that even in broad daylight the very workmen trembled to perform, walked on the summit, and at last safely descended into the interior of the church, where he fell fast asleep. In their dreams, many persons have unconsciously performed feats wonderful as this*: but in neither case

* We know an authenticated instance of a sailor, who, during several nights, left his hammock, ascended the giddy mast to its very summit, and

can the preservation be ascribed to any natural cause ; it was the work of Heaven, of that special Providence which, as the Scriptures teach us, watches over the children of men.* The morning's sun brought with it returning reason ; nor need we wonder that both he and the workmen, of whom two slept in the place, were unable to account for his being there. On such a foundation, in such an age, fable was sure to build, though to do our anonymous biographer justice, he ascribes it, as we have done, not to any visible interposition of angels, but to the care of that providence, without which " not a sparrow falls to the ground." That this " cedar in the house of the Lord," whose roots were moistened with the dew of heaven, whose head shot higher and higher, was destined to great things, was the pious anticipation of the age. The biographer is never weary of extolling him, in language generally tumid, frequently bombastic. " Like the cunning bee, he fluttered over the numerous meadows of sacred and divine volumes with much rapidity of intellect ; he appeared more intent on the nourishment of his mind by divine reading, than of his bodily wants, — to fill his breast, the habitation of the Holy Spirit, with the sweet nectar of religion." His fame flew as far as the court of Athelstane, to which he was introduced by one of his kinsmen. This change of life, which is very slightly noticed by his most ancient biographer, would lead us to infer that his devotional ardour was greatly cooled by worldly ambition ; but we are told that even in a court he was still conspicuous for the most rigid virtues. That he was not merely a proficient in ecclesiastical studies, — in the Scriptures and the works of the fathers ; that his ardent mind embraced other objects, may be inferred from their reproaches, that he was conversant with

quietly descended to his repose. The dangerous exploit was watched by several of the crew.

* Mr. Turner (*Anglo-Saxon* II. 240.) is unwilling to admit that there was any thing remarkable in the case. Rejecting the miraculous, as he does, yet we cannot ascribe Dunstan's escape, any more than the sailor's, to a *fortunate chance*.

the magic songs and incantations of his pagan forefathers. From this charge, which we at this day should rather consider a recommendation, — an evidence of laudable curiosity, — his biographer is anxious to defend him. In such an age, the knowledge would, doubtless, be regarded by many as diabolical. By the courtiers, who were resolved on his disgrace, he was scornfully represented as an ally of Satan ; and with such effect, that they obtained the royal permission to expel him from court.* The manner in which they effected this is extraordinary ; they one day tied him hand and foot, and threw him into a marsh or perhaps sewer ; but he contrived to extricate himself. On his way, however, to a friend's house, about a mile distant from the scene of his disgrace, some dogs, mistaking his wofully disfigured person for that of a beast, were preparing to worry him, when the sound of his voice subdued their fury, and made them fawn which had just been barking. This incident enabled him to draw a comparison between these irrational beasts and his Christian friends, not very much to the honour of the latter. Though this disgrace prevented him from again appearing at court, and considerably cooled his ambition, it did not withdraw him from the world. At this time, though sensible of the destination intended for him by his parents, he could not resolve to embrace it : in fact, he was strongly drawn towards marriage ; nor could all the exhortations of his uncle Elphege, bishop of Winchester, destroy the wish. In the anguish of his disappointment, the good bishop is said to have prayed that God would visit the youth with some affliction, grievous enough to effect his conversion. That Dunstan, whose person was diminutive, and whose constitution was weak, should often be assailed by bodily illness, is natural enough ; but that which

* According to archbishop Parker, who loses no opportunity of striking at Dunstan and the monks, he was an ally of both women and devils. " Quibus (mulieribus) sibi perinde ac cum dæmonibus frequens commercium fuit."—*Antiquitates*, p. 80.

followed was characteristically regarded as a peculiar infliction of heaven, in answer to the bishop's prayer. It had a good effect: when death seemed imminent, Dunstan vowed, if he should ever recover, to assume the monastic habit: he kept his vow, and rose a monk from his bed of sickness. That his future elevation was predicted to him in a dream by one of his monastic brethren is not incredible: our dreams partake of the character of our waking thoughts; in this case they only prove that the new brother was ambitious: probably he felt his own superiority so much as to be convinced that opportunity only was wanting for the display, and, consequently, for the recompense of his talents. We do not make these observations in any hostile spirit to the memory of Dunstan: if he had ambition, it was evidently associated with qualities which ennobled it. That he had virtues, no less than talents, was soon shown to the world. A noble widow, by name Ethelfleda, resolving, in the spirit of the age, to consecrate her remaining days to prayer and penance, caused a hermitage to be constructed in the vicinity of Glastonbury, at some distance from one which he had constructed for himself. In that age the usual austerities of the cloister were not thought to be severe enough; in fact, Dunstan would have had some difficulty in finding one: the church of Glastonbury stood on holy ground, and the enthusiast thought no place so suitable for his hermitage as the one he had selected. It was, doubtless, his fame for sanctity that induced Ethelfleda to make him the director of her conscience. In time, however, — whether that time was long or short, the priest saith not, — the lady fell sick; and Dunstan, accompanied by other ecclesiastics, hastened to the church to pray for her. While before the altar he saw, or thought he saw, a white dove, emitting wonderful splendour from its wings, and directing its flight to the seclusion of the noble widow. The legend proceeds to inform us that when the monk hastened to his sick friend, he heard her behind her curtains, which

formed a partition in the apartment, conversing with some one ; that he enquired of her maids who was within with their mistress ; that all confessed their ignorance ; but that when he asked her, he learned that it was the celestial visitant whom he had seen while at the altar. This legend may safely be ascribed to the invention of common report, which, whether for good or ill, seldom stops short of extravagance.† The lady died, and, we may infer, left him money to be distributed among the poor, and to the church.* Dunstan might safely be trusted with riches, on which he evidently set no value whatever ; all that came into his hands he quickly employed in almsgiving. His disinterestedness naturally added to his reputation, which was, probably, not a little extended by the report that his harp, while hung against the wall, had, though untouched by human hands, emitted melodious sounds. By some modern writers this is ascribed to ventriloquism : it was probably the effect of his art ; for that he was well versed both in mechanism and in music is asserted by more than one of his biographers. His fame made king Edmund desire to see him, and he again appeared at court. But his character was changed : he was no longer anxious for royal favour ; as a necessary consequence, he soon became disagreeable to the king, and he was again expelled from court. But he was now a saint, and was not to be insulted with impunity. One day, says another idle legend, as the king was eagerly pursuing a stag, it rushed down a steep precipice, followed by the dogs, which were dashed to pieces. Perceiving his danger, he endeavoured to rein in his horse, then in full gallop, but in vain. In this emergency he remembered that he had ill treated the young monk,

* This, however, is very obscurely intimated by the priest : —

“ Et sua dat sanctis, sicut antea ipsa volebat
Corpore dum vixit.”

The tale of her having left him *all* her treasures, of having constituted him her heir, falls to the ground ; at least the old priest says nothing of the matter, and Osbern is not to be believed in any thing. The story is contradicted by the fact that, as a monk, Dunstan could not inherit property of any description, which his vow of poverty compelled him to renounce.

and he vowed, if his life were spared, to repair his injustice. The animal, when arrived at the brink, suddenly stood still ; and the king, his heart filled with gratitude to Heaven, returned and sent for Dunstan. " Mount a horse, and accompany me ! " was his command. He took the way to Glastonbury, entered the church, prayed, and wept ; then taking Dunstan by the hand, he led him to the chief seat in the cathedral, kissed him, and there solemnly invested him with the abbatial dignity. The new abbot hastened to collect a fraternity of Benedictines, who might both preach the word to the surrounding country, and secure their own salvation by living according to the sacred rule. His zeal could not fail to displease the powers of darkness, which, according to his credulous biographer, frequently annoyed him by appearing in different shapes ; but he had merit enough to set them at nought. Few are the lives of the saints not deformed by such marvellous relations ; but let not such deformities induce us to do what we must be often tempted to do, — to throw down the book with contempt. Dunstan is no more accountable for the legends invented respecting him, after he was laid low, than any other saint in the calendar. Nor let us too severely condemn even the biographer : he heard these wonders repeated ; in such an age they were doubted by no one ; he, therefore, not only received them with implicit credence, but to suppress them he would have considered injurious to the fame of his spiritual hero, derogatory even to the honour of God. Aided by two important advantages, — by his reputed sanctity, and by his abbatial dignity, — the progress of Dunstan was now rapid. He became the counsellor, the friend of Edred, who had seen an opportunity of presenting him with the bishopric of Winchester. But the abbot refused the dignity, on the plea that he was unequal to the duties, and unwilling to incur the responsibility, of such an office. Perhaps, too, he had a third reason, — a reluctance to be separated from the king, to whom he was evidently

attached. Some modern writers have contended that he had another, much less honourable to human nature, — the hope of succeeding Odo, then old, in the metropolitan see of Canterbury. But it may be rationally demanded, why should the acceptance of Winchester disqualify him for the primacy, when it was so usual to translate archbishops from a suffragan see? The dream which he professed, or rather which he is said, to have had the night following his refusal, is certainly suspicious: — that three apostles, Peter, Paul, and Andrew appeared to him, and that St. Andrew struck him with a rod because he had declined their apostolic society. He instantly awoke, and asked a monk who slept near him why he had struck him. The monk denied that he, or any body else, had dared to do such a thing. If this dream really happened, it proves that the abbot was either considerably swayed by ambition, or that he was fanatical; very probably he had a mixture of both in his mental system; though their existence may have been unconscious to himself. Whatever were the worldly feelings which occasionally influenced him, they were certainly subservient to nobler qualities. That he was regardless of riches; that he burned with zeal for the welfare of his fellow-creatures; that he was anxious to promote the glory of God, we have no doubt. The truth seems to be, that his judgment was often misled by an over-heated fancy; that he was often self-deluded. Such, indeed, could scarcely fail to be the effect of his austerities, and of the enthusiasm with which he entered into the minutest duties of his missionary office. — His conduct on the day of Edwin's coronation we have already noticed*: it certainly proves, that whatever were his good intentions, whatever his zeal for the interests of public morals, he forgot, on this occasion at least, the humility becoming a churchman, and the respect due even to an erring sovereign. His banishment endeared him to the people;

* See page 29. of the present volume.

he was recalled by Edgar, restored to his abbey, and to more than ancient favour at court. That his mind was no longer averse to ecclesiastical dignities, he soon proved by his acceptance of the see of Worcester. The causes of this mental revolution we shall not attempt to investigate: they might be recondite; but we are rather disposed to assign the more obvious, — a lurking ambition, and a wish to be more extensively useful; the latter, a laudable, the former, not a very censurable, motive. Soon afterwards, however, he consented to hold the bishopric of London, in conjunction with that of Worcester. For this conduct there is no defence; he knew that it was a violation of the canons; and he must have felt that neither he nor any other man would be equal to the vigilant superintendence of two sees. The primacy was soon forced on him by the resignation of St. Odo's successor; and he set out for Rome to receive the pallium from the hands of the pope. On his way, he caused every thing he had to be so lavishly distributed to the poor, that one night nothing was left for himself or his domestics; but their wants were unexpectedly supplied by the abbot of a neighbouring monastery, who despatched three monks with provisions to the place where the archbishop was passing the night. On his return he showed that he was well worthy of his dignity; in the discharge of his sacred functions, he was most indefatigable; he spared not vice in high places; he carefully provided for the necessities of the poor: on suitable occasions he exhorted, or threatened, or consoled, with an energy that showed he was resolved to effect a moral reformation. The churches which he founded he was careful to fill with monks,—the only ecclesiastics on whom he could rely. But on this subject the biographer, whom we have hitherto exclusively followed, affords us no information. A few idle visions, and inapposite citations from Scripture, compose the remainder of his sketch; so that for other, and,

indeed, the most important, facts of Dunstan's life we must repair to different sources.*

But before we proceed with the life of this celebrated man, we will examine how far the relation we have followed agrees with those of other biographers scarcely less ancient. The retrospect will be curious and instructive, as proving how short a period is necessary for the invention and propagation of the most monstrous or the most ridiculous legends. We have already seen that the anonymous priest is sufficiently inclined to the marvellous ; but he is far outstript, as indeed we might have expected, by succeeding writers. As the work of Adelard is not before us, we turn to Osbern's, which, in reality, contains all that is to be found in Adelard, and much more. It is interesting to perceive what progress credulity could make in the single century that elapsed between the death of Dunstan and the time when the precentor of Canterbury wrote.

According to Osbern, the very birth of Dunstan was preceded by portents. His parents, Heorstane and Cynedrith, being in the church of Glastonbury, and joining in the solemn service of the purification†, suddenly the tapers, which all held in their hands during the procession, were, with the lamps of the church, extinguished. But this darkness was of short continuance ; for a fire immediately descended from heaven, and lighted the taper in Cynedrith's hand. What could this miracle betoken but that the unborn infant was destined to some particular work of Providence? The next remarkable passage concerns his feverish delirium ; during which, as we have before related, he precipitately left the house, ascended the scaffolding of the church, descended, and fell asleep. The contemporary monk, as we have seen, relates this as a natural event ; but

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* Vita S. Dunstani, Auctore B. Presbytero Coevo, cap. i.—vi. (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, Maii, tom. iv. p. 346—356) Osbernus et Eadmerus, Prologi in Vitam S. Dunstani (apud Wharton, Anglia Sacra, tom. ii. pp. 88. 211.).

† Candelmas, so called because all who took part in the procession bore a candle or taper.

Osbern must have a miracle. An angel was sent to heal him : he was instantly restored to health ; and in the joy of his heart he hastened to the church to thank heaven for the visible manifestation. But though his celestial physician led the way, the devil, incensed at his recovery, and fearful of the havoc which he was destined to make in the realms of darkness, surrounded him with a multitude of demons in the shape of dogs, and endeavoured by frightful howls to impede his way. The terrified youth invoked Christ ; but recovering confidence in his heavenly conductor, the wand which he held in his hand he shook in the faces of the demons, and thus put them to flight. “ O holy and terrible name of Christ,” exclaims the biographer ; “ hidden from the wise, revealed unto babes !” Of course angelic hands helped him up the ladder of the church, and aided him to descend without injury. Singular, we are told, was the grace vouchsafed to this youth : blessed before his birth ; glorious for virtue before reaching maturity ; cured by angel hands ; dreaded, when cured, by the devil ; received into a church, of which all the doors were locked. His attainments are as much exaggerated by Osbern as the two circumstances to which we have adverted. He is represented as excelling in many sciences, and many branches of mechanism, of which we find no mention in the most ancient of his biographers. Musical talents he certainly possessed ; and these were probably the chief cause of his introduction to the court of king Athelstane. Osbern, however, would fain persuade us that he was also one of the royal judges, — “ nunc surgens ad orandum Deum, nunc sedens ad dijudicandas causas hominum,” — a gratuitous assumption sufficiently disproved by his extreme youth. It was the devil, rather than the jealous courtier, which destroyed his favour with Athelstane ; if so, the arch-enemy must have lost his cunning. A court has, in all ages, been justly regarded as the peculiar abode of Satan : why, then, should Dunstan be expelled from a place where his soul was sure to be lost,

and urged into the arms of his kinsman, the bishop of Winchester, who prevailed on him to assume the monastic habit?—The cell which he constructed contiguous to the church of Glastonbury was about five feet in length by two and a half in breadth; inside, as the ground lay below the surface of the earth, a man might stand upright, but outside the roof scarcely reached the breast! Well might Osbern, who professes to have seen it, consider it as a tomb rather than a human habitation. But small as this habitation was, the devil, who envied him its possession, resolved to dislodge him from it. We may here observe, that by the pens of Osbern, and other credulous writers of the period, his satanic majesty is not invested with either much dignity or much sense; he is represented as a sort of half-witted lubber fiend, or even as an overgrown child, always in mischief, and always sure to be punished for it. One evening he assumed the human shape, went to the hut, thrust his head through the window, and seeing that Dunstan was busy with the hammer and anvil, told him that he had a job for him. The saint hammered away, as if heeding him not. The devil now began to talk obscenely; to mention several women whose charms he voluptuously described; and he contrasted the pleasures within his reach with the melancholy life he was now leading. By these lewd words “the wrestler of Christ” detected his visiter. Without betraying his thoughts, he returned his pincers to the fire, and blew lustily with his bellows, his lips silently invoking the aid of Christ; and when he perceived the pincers were white with heat, he drew them hastily from the fire, applied them dexterously to the visiter’s nose, whom with all his might he endeavoured to pull into the hut. Great were the monster’s howls while struggling to escape from “this bald pate;” at length down went the wall, and away went the yelling demon. The following morning, when Dunstan was asked by the neighbours what horrid sound was that which had prevented them from sleeping, he related the

cause, much to their astonishment and to his own reputation.—On the assassination of Edmund by the robber *, Dunstan lost a friend,—an event which of necessity afforded great joy to the devil, who danced before him at the very time the deed was perpetrating. But if he lost one, he gained another in Edred, the successor of Edmund. Edred, however, did not long sway the sceptre ; and Edwy, who was indeed to prove an enemy to the saint, ascended the throne. The moment Edred died, a celestial voice, to the great terror of the domestics and nobles assembled, pronounced that he was sleeping in the Lord. After the funeral rites Dunstan returned to Glastonbury where he had soon an opportunity of working another miracle. While some workmen were hoisting a huge beam intended to run from wall to wall, and to support a new roof, the ropes suddenly snapped, and down came the huge beam. Multitudes must have been crushed to death had not the saint raised his hand, made the sign of the cross, and arrested the ponderous beam in its descent ; it not only stood suspended in the air, but in a few moments began to move upwards towards the top of the wall. “ If the devil did not envy such glory as this,” observes Osborn, “ what *could* he envy ?” He appeared in the shape of a bear, with grinning teeth and open jaws, while with his paws he seized, and endeavoured to wrest, the staff which the saint held in his hand ; but the saint belaboured him so soundly with it, that he was glad to escape away.—When Dunstan was exiled by king Edwin, what joy could equal the devil’s ? To see his old enemy expelled the country, the Benedictine monastery of Glastonbury despoiled, and the poor, in consequence, robbed of their support, filled him with so much rapture, that he was heard laughing immoderately in the vestibule of Glastonbury church. Dunstan recognised his voice, and advised him to moderate his exultation ; for assuredly the day would come when he would be as much cast down. The prediction was soon verified by

* See page 27. of the present volume.

his recall from banishment, and his elevation to the see of Worcester.—Even his consecration could not pass without a miracle. By St. Odo he was nominated archbishop of Canterbury instead of bishop of Worcester; and when the primate was told that he had committed a mistake, he replied that he had spoken under the influence of the Holy Ghost; that Dunstan was destined to succeed him in the see of Canterbury.—Great as was the grudge he might be supposed to feel towards Edwin, he yet saved the soul of that prince from hell. One day, while in the church of Worcester, he perceived the recently departed spirit in the custody of an infernal legion, who were dragging it away; but they were forced to appear before Dunstan, to acquaint him with that monarch's fate. Though the decree had gone forth from the Highest, that the lot of Edwin was to be with Dathan, Abiram, and other worthies of yore, the bishop, falling on his face, prayed with so much fervour and perseverance for the condemned wretch, that the devils were compelled to relinquish their prey. Not the least remarkable part of this legend is the astonishment of the demons at this unaccountable behaviour of the prelate. That instead of rejoicing with them over the destruction of his enemy, he should wrest that enemy from their power, utterly confounded them. "What a man art thou!" was their indignant cry. "Always art thou ungrateful to us. We did thee a service; thou rewardest us by punishment. We came from hell to avenge thy wrongs; thy curses force us to return in confusion!"—"In what have I been unjust?" demanded the saint. "This man offended Christ and me; for Christ's sake I forgave him the wrong he did me: Christ, at my intercession, has forgiven him. The clemency, therefore, which Christ and I have deigned to show, how dare you be so wicked as to reprove?"*—Finally, soon

* We give the original of this blasphemy, lest the reader should distrust the translation:—

"Quid injuste actum est vobis? Si peccavit homo iste in Christum, et in me peccavit. Sed quoniam meas propter Christum dimisi injurias;

after, Dunstan, by the favour of Edgar, or as Osbern would say, by that of Christ, was raised to the primacy of Canterbury, where other miracles were performed. 1. As he was celebrating the communion in his cathedral, the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, descended upon him; and after remaining a while on his shoulder, settled on the monument of the deceased Odo. 2. Water being wanted at the consecration of a new church, the primate commanded it to issue from the dry rock, and the prodigy followed; from that day the fountain was called St. Dunstan's Well.*

If the reader have perused the two paragraphs with attention, he will be at no loss to separate the real from the fabulous actions of Dunstan. The more ancient of the relations is sufficiently credulous; yet it is free from the monstrous legends of Osbern. Had such legends existed in the time of the contemporary priest, he would not have failed to believe and to record them; to suppress them, as we have before observed, he would have regarded as impiety. In his days public rumour had not yet had time sufficient to magnify and create; but between him and Osbern a century intervened, — a period ample enough for the erection of the mighty structure of fable which we at once despise and execrate. Though common report can effect wonderful things; though it turns “something black as a crow” into three crows †; let not the whole blame be cast on the ignorant populace alone. The guilt of the fable must be shared by the biographers — by Adelard, Osbern, and, perhaps, by Eadmer; and, above all, by the anonymous author, whose Latin original was destroyed in the Canterbury fire of 1070, but of which a trans-

dimisit et suas Christus cum ejus ego clementiam deprecatus sum. Quod ergo Christus et ego dignati sumus clementer indulgere, vos quâ temeritate audetis improbe reprehendere?”

The *ego et rex meus* of Wolsey was bad enough; but what can we say of this?

* *Mendax Osbernus, Vita S. Dunstani* (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii. p. 90—110. apud Bollandistas, *Acta SS. Maii*, tom. iv. p. 359—370.; et apud Mabillonium, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Sæculum v.* p. 660—679.

† See the apposite well-known tale of *The Three Crows*.

lation remained in the Saxon ; and to whose distortion of historic facts evidence is borne by Eadmer. No doubt these writers deliberately added to the stock of fable. If with blind credulity they collected every idle legend that floated on the breath of popular fame, or that disgraced the lying sketches of contemporary writers no longer extant, which they added or embellished, no wonder that they both magnified the bulk, and increased the number, of prodigies. But posterity need not be led astray. If of two writers on the same subject we find that the one, contemporary, though sufficiently credulous, does not outrageously violate probability, and that the other, a century afterwards, details circumstances to which not the remotest allusion is to be discovered in his predecessor — circumstances not only improbable but impossible — what, in such a case, does criticism enjoin ? What but to requite with contempt the posterior relation ? The application of this obvious principle would have saved much angry disputation respecting this most controverted of ecclesiastical characters. The Protestant has no real ground to assail, the Roman Catholic no need to defend him. The fact is, that religious bitterness alone has been consulted ; that historic criticism has been intentionally hurried from the stage, because it would have prevented a contest which both parties were resolved to wage. It is indeed true, as we have before observed, that the anonymous priest — by Mabillon supposed to be Bridferth* — has a few marvellous tales ; but what does this prove beyond the fact, that the biographer partook of the credulity of his times ? Very possibly, we think very probably, Dunstan himself was sometimes the dupe of an over-heated imagination : he might sometimes confound his sleeping with his waking thoughts ; and if at that moment he betrayed to an attendant his suspicion of a supernatural appearance, rumour would not fail to convert doubt into certainty ; to invest the most shadowy form with all the attributes of substance.

* Bridferth was too wise a man to write such stuff.

There is, however, no reason to infer that any of these legends were known during the life of Dunstan; that they were multiplied after his death, we have sufficiently shown from the example of Osbern, and from the admission of Eadmer, in the prologue to the life of this saint. Superstition, like hope and fear, is creative; in a barbarous age it is sure to reign triumphant: and to expect that every man can then be free from its empire, is to expect, not indeed an impossibility, but certainly a phenomenon of extremely rare occurrence. That few are the men who have risen superior to their age, may be a truism; but it is a truism which we are sometimes apt to overlook.—With respect to these legends, as to many other things, charity is the best philosophy. It is easy to rail at obsolete prejudices; it is still easier to gratify party malignity by ascribing the least honourable motives for the actions of an adversary: but the Christian philosopher weighs times and circumstances. If truth be immutable in its nature, he knows that error is perpetually changing; he does not expect wisdom to be the constant ally of virtue: and where a problem has two modes of solution, he will assuredly, *cæteris paribus*, adopt the one most consonant with charity, especially if it have the additional merit of being most consistent with reason.*

961. It is unfortunate that we have scarcely any record of Dunstan's pontificate by contemporary writers. The most ancient, the anonymous priest, merely praises, in general terms, the vigour of his spiritual government. Osbern, Eadmer, William of Malmesbury, and other writers, are indeed diffuse enough; but the authority of Osbern may be regarded as the authority of all: for though all had, as we have more than once observed, access to another lying writer, the work of that writer has long perished; and Osbern's statements are so unconnected, his credulity so puerile, his knavery so evident, his declamation so loose, his encomiums so elaborately turgid, that *henceforth* it is almost impossible

* See Eadmer, Prologus (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, ii. 211.).

to separate the real from the fabulous actions imputed to the primate. We must, however, make the attempt. We should feel disposed to reject altogether what follows, were not some things incidentally confirmed by other authority, and did not others bear within themselves that best of all evidence, internal probability. That Dunstan was an excellent primate, may be inferred alike from his dauntless disposition ; from his charity towards the poor ; from his religious fervour ; from the severity of his morals ; and from his literary attainments. To quench the revived embers of paganism — revived by the Danish descents — and to lead those who had a right faith to its natural, though, unhappily, not necessary concomitant, good works — he proceeded from town to town, and such was his eloquence, that it was difficult to resist him. To reconcile differences ; to soothe the exasperated ; to dissolve unlawful connections ; to refute heresy ; to restore ruined places of worship ; to found new ones ; to relieve from his ecclesiastical revenues the widow, the orphan, the stranger — are described as his constant occupation, the tenour of which was relieved only by his private devotions, or his literary pursuits. By his advice king Edgar exhibited new zeal in the discovery and punishment of the numerous criminals who, during the late domestic troubles, had so long agitated the kingdom. But the sword of justice was seldom unsheathed ; banishment, whether for a period or perpetually, was the usual penalty of crime. Nor was he less watchful over the discipline of the church : the clergyman who indulged in hunting or traffic, he rigorously suspended, or even degraded. So far he will have the praise of all men ; but in two other respects, — in his substitution of the monastic for the secular clergy, and his expulsion of the ecclesiastics who refused to forsake their wives, — there will necessarily be opposition of opinion. In the first of these cases his motives were not more justifiable than his conduct was useful. The canons, whether secular or conventual, were, as we have before

shown, sunk into the lowest degradation — degradation alike as to knowledge and morals ; — they had forfeited all claim to respect, and their removal was demanded by the interests of society. — Whether celibacy or marriage be more advisable in a clergyman, has been fiercely debated even among the Roman Catholics themselves. Into the merits of the question we will not *here* enter ; sufficient is it to know, that on this subject discipline has varied ; that if originally marriage, within certain limitations at least, was permitted, it was subsequently forbidden ; and that it was never sanctioned in the Anglo-Saxon church. During the disorders occasioned by the Danish invasion, when the bonds of discipline were relaxed in every other point ; when priests hunted, bartered, and fought ; when they preached or drank, prayed or swore at their own good pleasure ; we cannot wonder that many of them should commit the more reasonable offence of taking wives. They well knew that such connections were not in themselves sinful ; that they had even been recognised, nay, that even now they were tolerated, by several bishops ; they felt that these connections were as favourable, at least, to virtue, as celibacy had ever been ; and they acted as if, by their frequency, they should bid defiance to every attempt made to dissolve them. Whether, at their ordinations, they had contracted the obligation of celibacy, has been much doubted. If they had, they probably considered that obligation as virtually rescinded by the circumstances of the times. They must have known, however, that they were acting in opposition to the canons, to that of universal custom, as well as to the custom of their ancestors. If celibacy was canonically binding on the Saxon ecclesiastics, they must be regarded, not merely as rebels to authority, but as false to their own engagements. However this be, the primate resolved that no married ecclesiastic should be permitted any longer to discharge his functions. To secure that degree of co-operation, without which his unassisted efforts would be

unavailing, he took care, as the sees fell vacant, to fill them with men on whom he could rely. All the bishops thus created were monks. Brithelm, a monk of Glastonbury, was raised to the see of Wells; Wulf-sine, abbot of Westminster, to that of Sherburne. But the prelates on whom he placed the firmest reliance were saints Oswald and Ethelwold, of whom a brief account must be given.*

St. Oswald was, probably, born about the year 920 : 920
he was the nephew of St. Odo, who had the charge of to
his education. That, under such auspices, he should 972.
turn his thoughts towards the church, was to be expected. Made first canon, next dean of Winchester, he was disgusted with the loose discipline, and the worldly spirit, of his brother canons. Having vainly endeavoured to reform them, — both young and old agreeing to decline his exhortations, — he proved his disinterestedness no less than he satisfied his conscience, by resigning his dignity, and hastening to a Benedictine establishment — the usual resort of pious ecclesiastics — to receive the habit. From this and similar passages, which we peruse in almost every page of the ecclesiastical records, it is impossible to believe that the secular and conventual canons of this period deserve the praises of some modern writers. That their fervour was fled; that many were occupied in mercantile pursuits; that the desire of gain had seized on most; that many indulged in the most unbecoming amusements — hunting and gambling among the rest; that the offices of religion were neglected, and a melancholy example afforded to the rising generation, are facts based not only on the hagiologic biographers, but on the acts of councils. Yet, by modern writers, we are gravely informed, that the only crime of the canons was their living piously in holy wedlock †; an assertion made in direct contradic-

* *Mendax Osbernus, Vita S. Dunstani* (ubi suprâ). We wholly reject Eadmer, William of Malmesbury, and other subsequent biographers.

† “*Quem ordinem ob illorum conjugium sanctum omnibus spreto et ludibrio habitum Odo conspiciens,*” &c. — *Parker, 77*. This acrimonious writer is every where the same; every where assailing the monks with the foulest epithets, and every where extolling the canons; and that, too, in

tion to the whole spirit of our ecclesiastical annals. This wilful perversion of history demands the severest reprehension; yet it is allowed to pass comparatively unnoticed, from archbishop Parker to Mr. Turner.—At Fleury, St. Oswald remained some time to perfect himself in the discipline of his order. From the abbot he obtained an apartment in the church, where he could at any time retire to pray before the altar, or to commune with himself. Of course such a man, in such an age, could not fail to receive frequent visits from the devil:—

“ One night, while occupied in contemplation and prayer, the evil spirit appeared, and endeavoured to divert or to suspend the devotions of the man of God, by horrid sounds, and by other means of terror. But he, protected by the shield of faith, was no more frightened at the roaring of the lion, or the hissing of the serpent, than at the bleating of the sheep. The cries of these, and other animals, the wicked one poured into his ears; but he laughed to scorn both them and their author. Whereupon the demon disappeared, but soon returned in the disguise of an angel of light. The man of God signed himself with the cross, well knowing that it could not displease an angel of light, while it could not fail to expel an angel of darkness. And so it happened; for the malicious tempter, perceiving the sign, disappeared like smoke.”

The reputation of Oswald passed the Straits, and reached the ears of his uncle, who desired him to return; but that uncle he was to see no more: before his arrival at Canterbury, he heard of the primate's death. In the bishop of Dorchester, however, he found a friend, at a time when monks stood peculiarly in need of friends; and a greater still in Dunstan, who resigned to him the see of Worcester. His first object was to form a community of monks, twelve of whom he established at Westbury; but he was soon to have a nobler foundation:—

“ And it happened that earl Elwin had, for many years, been tormented by daily fits of the gout. And a certain fisherman, named Walgit, one day entered his boat to fish for his lord the earl, in the pool of Ramsey; but, after many useless efforts, overcome by fatigue, he began to sleep. And as he

despite of his own conviction to the contrary; for he could not be so ignorant of our ecclesiastical history as his words would lead us to believe.

thus slept, St. Benedict, appearing to him, said, 'When tomorrow's sun arises, cast thy net into the water, and thou shalt draw a multitude of fish. The largest of them, called the *haket*, present from me to thy lord Elwin, pray him to accept my offer with benignity, and tell him to build, without delay, in this island of monks, a monastery dedicated to St. Mary the Mother of Mercy, to me, and to all the holy virgins. Let him observe where the animals of the island rest in the evening, and when he shall perceive a bull arise and strike the earth with the right foot, there let him instantly build an altar. And that he may believe my message, I now bend thy little finger, which he shall restore to its proper position, and shall himself soon be relieved from his gout.' So the man, awaking, caught a multitude of fish; and the largest he offered, in the saint's name, to his master, relating at the same time what he had seen and heard; and he prayed the earl to restore his finger. Then Elwin raised his finger, which adhered to his hand, and proceeded as well as he could to the island. And when he entered the island, he felt that he was perfectly cured of the disease; and the bull rising struck the ground with the right foot, thus divinely indicating the place where the altar should be erected. Wherefore the earl praised God, and immediately built them a chapel of wood. Soon he added ample donations; and, within five years, St. Oswald there constructed a famous monastery, which he solemnly dedicated in the year of our Lord 974, and over which he placed Ednoth the monk, as the first abbot."

Both as bishop of Worcester and as archbishop of York, to which latter dignity he succeeded in 972, St. Oswald was an effectual co-operator with Dunstan in the reformation of the clergy, or, to speak more correctly, in the substitution of monastic for secular and conventual priests.*

St. Ethelwold was a native of Winchester, and, probably, born before St. Oswald: in 948 he was certainly abbot of Abingdon, a dignity which he could not have attained at a very early age. Like the mother of St.

910
to
963.

* Anonymus, *Vita S. Oswaldi* (apud Mabillonium, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Sæculum*, v. p. 727, &c.; necnon apud Bollandistas, *Acta SS. die Feb. xxix. et apud Surium, De Probatis Vitis Sanctorum, die Octobris xv. Anon. Vita ejusdem* (apud Mabillon, v. 735, &c.). Eadmerus, *Vita ejusdem* (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, ii. 191, &c.). Anon. *Historia Ramesiensis*, cap. 8—19. (apud Gale, *Quindecim Scriptores*, p. 391, &c.) Alfordus, *Annales Eccl. (sub annis)*.

This monk of Ramsey gives a different account of the foundation of the monastery of Ramsey; but he is evidently much more recent than either the one we have chiefly followed, or Eadmer.

Dunstan, so also had his, a presage of his future greatness ; but, as we are tired of such legends, we shall not repeat it. His youth appears to have been distinguished for a piety uncommon at such an age. It was remarkable enough to reach the ears of Athelstan, who sent for him to court ; and, by that monarch's command, he received holy orders at the hands of Elphege, bishop of Winchester, — the very day, we are told, on which St. Dunstan was admitted to the priesthood. Soon afterwards he repaired to Glastonbury, where he assumed the monastic habit under the discipline of that celebrated man. There he made considerable progress in literature, — for Dunstan was not only learned himself, but a patron of letters. “ There,” to use the affected language of his biographer, “ he learned the liberal knowledge of grammar, the sweetness of mellifluous versification ; like the prudent bee, which fluttereth from one sweet flower to another, extracting the delightful savour, he sucked the flowers of the divine volumes.” By Dunstan he was soon made dean of the monastery ; but his elevation did not endanger his humility : he remembered, we are told, the saying of our Lord, — “ He who would be greatest among ye, let him be your servant.” To study the monastic discipline in its greater perfection, — such as it existed at Fleury-sur-Loire and other places, — he was preparing at length to leave the kingdom ; but Edgiva, the mother of king Edred, persuaded her son not to lose the services of so virtuous a man. To retain him in his own country, he was presented with Abingdon, a place where a little monastery, or rather cell, had anciently existed, but now consisting of only a few miserable buildings. But, unpromising as was the place, he was followed to it by several monks of Glastonbury ; and in a short time he was at the head of a flourishing community. At this period, Glastonbury and Abingdon appear to have been the only monastic establishments south of the Humber ; the only ones at least in which the Benedictine institution prevailed. By the munificence of Edred, the new monastery was soon

amply endowed; and a magnificent structure at length reared its head over the fertile fields and thick woods of the neighbourhood. After the elevation of his friend Dunstan to the primacy, Ethelwold was presented by king Edgar with the see of Winchester.*

Whilst the aid of these prelates encouraged Dunstan 963. to attempt a more extensive reformation, he would not commence it until he had received the permission of the pope, the support of the king, and the formal sanction of a national council. In that council, king Edgar is said to have pronounced the animated discourse penned by the abbot of Rieval; a discourse in which he deeply lamented the degeneracy of the clergy, and the misapplication of the ecclesiastical revenues; in which he exhorted the prelates then present to employ, without hesitation, the powers placed in their hands by the canons for the removal of such monstrous abuses. Whether such a speech was made by Edgar or not, it is certain that the council passed a decree that every priest, deacon, and subdeacon should either observe chastity, or resign his ecclesiastical character; and its execution was intrusted to Dunstan, Oswald, and Ethelwold. It appears that the clergy of Canterbury promised compliance with the new regulations; they were certainly not ejected to make room for monks. But, in the dioceses of Worcester and Winchester, the case was very different. Oswald, a prelate of great moderation, was averse to open violence, if the end in view could be attained by gentle means. He had recourse to stratagem. In the vicinity of his cathedral he erected a church †, which he confided to monks, and in which he himself celebrated mass. The people followed their bishop; the cathedral was soon deserted; soon the dean assumed the habit, and

* Wulstanus, Vita S. Ethelwoldi (apud Mabillonium, Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Seculum, v. p. 609, &c.; necnon apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, die Augusti i.). Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicæ (sub annis).

† There is a legend in Oswald's anonymous biographer, which of course Eadmer improves, that when the first stone of the church was to be laid, eighty men were insufficient to move it. The bishop being hastily sent for, perceived a little black devil sitting and grinning on the stone, but the sign of the cross soon put him to flight.

obtained the dignity of prior ; and, by degrees, his example was followed by most of the canons, until all were enrolled in the monastic fraternity, and the cathedral was served by Benedictines alone. Oswald renewed the same policy in regard to the canons of Winchelcomb. In other parts of his diocese he founded seven other monasteries, and in two he displaced the canons by monks. Over the celebrated monastery of Ramsey, the foundation of which we have already noticed*, he placed Abbo of Fleury, a monk of considerable learning, who did more to infuse a spirit of literature into the fraternity, and, we may add, through the kingdom generally, than almost any man of his time. — Ethelwold had more resistance to encounter. “ The canons of this ancient cathedral,” says the contemporary Wolstan, “ were imbued with the worst vices ; — with pride, haughtiness, and luxury ; — some of them disdained to celebrate mass in their turn ; some put away the wives whom they had unlawfully married, and took others without ceremony ; some were addicted to gluttony and drunkenness.” By another authority they are said to have belonged to noble families, and to have indulged the hope of being able to resist the efforts of their bishop: it is certain that they secretly derided his threats ; and powerful friends they must have had, as even Edgar would not for some time consent to their expulsion. At length, perceiving that partial attempts at their reformation were unsuccessful, he abandoned them to their fate, and even sent a royal officer to assist the bishop in reducing them to obedience. One Saturday, Ethelwold, accompanied by the officer, entered the choir during the celebration of mass, cast on the floor a heap of cowls, and exclaimed to the astonished canons, “ Now is the time when you must decide. Receive this habit, or depart, — the only choice left you !” Three only complied, and that with evident reluctance ; the rest sullenly retired, and their places were supplied by a colony of monks from Abingdon. To the honour of

* See before, page 283.

Ethelwold it is recorded, that, instead of abandoning the ejected clergy to want, or to the uncertain aid of friends, he nobly provided for their support. Winchester had still another church, the Minster, founded by the great Alfred, and served by canons ; but in twelve months they also were ejected, and two monasteries were erected for the accommodation of Benedictine communities. In other parts of his diocese the bishop raised new monastic foundations, or converted colleges into abbeys ; and that his example and Oswald's was followed by the other clergy, and by Edgar himself, may be inferred from that monarch's boast, — that in six years forty seven monasteries had been peopled with monks. Before we dismiss these two prelates, we may observe, that both were admirable men ; that, for religious zeal, for integrity of life, for charity towards the poor, they had few equals ; that Ethelwold died in 984, Oswald in 992.*

There are some other actions in the life of Dunstan, 968
which modern prejudice has wilfully misrepresented. to
1. He is accused of imposing too light a penance, or, 988.
rather, no penance whatever, on king Edgar, for a most
heinous crime, — that of violating a nun. We give the
relation of the most ancient authority, Osbern : —

“ Resolved to disturb this general joy of the church, the devil inspired the soul of this most christian king with love for a virgin converted to God ; though he could not divert Dunstan from the path of righteousness. he might yet lead astray the man whom Dunstan most loved, and on whom depended the support of religion. This sin against the virgin being committed, and the knowledge of it spread among the people, Dunstan, deeply sorrowful on account both of the sin itself, and of the infamy it entailed on the king, immediately visited the royal offender, like a second David sleeping with his

* Wolstan, Vita S. Ethelwoldi (apud Mabillonium, Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Sæc. p. 614, &c. ; necnon apud Bollandistas, Acta SS. die Augusti i.). Anon. Vita S. Oswaldi (apud Mabillonium, v. 730, &c., et apud Bolland. die Feb. xxix.). Eadmerus, Vita S. Oswaldi (apud Wharton, Anglia Sacra, ii. 200, &c.). Mendax Osbernus, Vita S. Dunstani, necnon Eadmerus, Vita ejusdem (apud eundem, ii p. 110, &c. ; p. 213, &c.). Annales Wintonienses, p. 289, &c. Anon. Historia Eliensis, lib. ii. cap. 27, &c. Historia Ramesiensis, cap. 58, 59. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Sax. tom. iii. (sub annis.) Lingard, Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 410, &c.

Bathsheba, but he entered the palace in anger far greater than Nathan of old. Seeing the archbishop, the monarch held out his hand to conduct him to the royal throne. The latter refusing to accept his hand, and regarding him with indignant looks, said 'Darest thou, who hast violated a virgin of God *, touch the hands of his bishop? Thou hast sullied the spouse of thy Creator; — will thy obsequiousness appease the bridegroom's friend? The enemy of Christ shall be no friend of mine!' Terrified by the thunder of these words, the king fell at the feet of the upbraiding bishop, with tears confessed his fault, and humbly besought pardon. The pontiff was deeply affected: weeping himself, he raised the monarch from the ground. Having expatiated on the enormity of the crime, and disposed the royal mind to satisfaction, he decreed the penance: — during seven years the king was to lay aside his crown, to fast two days a month, to distribute his paternal riches to the poor. He was, moreover, to found a nunnery for holy virgins, since it was merely just that he who had snatched one virgin from God, should be the means of bringing many unto Him. He was also to expel unworthy men from their churches, to introduce monks in their stead, to sanction a new code of just laws, and to send copies of the Scriptures into different counties, for the instruction of his people."

The nun, — for such we must call her, — was soon secluded in her convent; but the issue of her short connection with the king was a daughter, afterwards St. Edith, who, like her mother, passed her days in the monastery of Wilton. Hence the reader may judge what credit is due to that most faithless of historians, Hume, who asserts, "that Edgar was not separated from his mistress, and that the culprit was only enjoined to abstain from wearing his crown during seven years, and to deprive him so long of that vain ornament;" and to Turner, who calls the penance "trifling." That the penance was a severe one for a *king*, — a private individual must have done penance during life, — will be acknowledged by every man who has no party in-

* Malmesbury (*De Pontificibus*, lib. ii. fol. 143. ; necnon *De Regibus*, lib. ii. cap. 8.) says, that the victim was not a nun, but a pupil of the nuns; that she had not received the veil: "Certum est non tunc sanctimoniale fuisse, sed puellam laicam." And, before Malmesbury, Eadmer had said, "Inter sanctimoniales non velata nutriebatur." (*Vita S. Dunstani*, p. 218.) In this, as in all other cases, we prefer the most ancient authority. If she were not a nun, where is the point of Dunstan's reproof?

terests to serve. The conduct of Dunstan on this occasion is worthy of our unqualified admiration. Here the Roman catholics would be justified in a terrible retort: "You call the penance *trifling*: acquaint us with the name of one protestant bishop, — and protestant bishops have been no strangers to royal delinquency, — who has ever inflicted one so heavy?"

2. A second charge against Dunstan rests on no better foundation. After the death of Edgar, and under an infant king, the canons naturally endeavoured to regain their lost benefices. Their views were favoured by the political circumstances of the times. Though Edmund the Martyr had been crowned by Dunstan and his monastic brethren, a considerable party had declared for Ethelred. Elfrida, the mother of Ethelred, who was at its head, openly espoused the cause of the ejected clergy, while the monks adhered to the rightful monarch. That in such circumstances the partisans of the queen and her son should ill treat the monks was to be expected. In some places the latter retaliated, and there was a civil war. Thus the governor of Mercia expelled all the monks from that province, while the ealdorman of East-Anglo supported them. To assuage the angry feelings of the nobles, Dunstan convoked a synod at Winchester, in which, when the question of restoring the canons was agitated, "wonderful to relate," says Osbern, "a crucifix exclaimed, '*Absit hoc ut fiat! absit hoc ut fiat!*'" Now, what would be the impression of any unbiassed, sober-minded reader, on meeting with such a passage? Undoubtedly he would smile at the biographer's credulity, or execrate his knavery; and, if he were well versed in the literature of the period, neither that credulity, nor this knavery, would much surprise him. He would no more dream of seriously investigating such fables, than he would the Arabian Nights, or the exploits of Odin. Modern ingenuity has, however, discovered that a voice really issued from the crucifix, and that the scene was a concerted exhibition of the primate, to silence those by

supernatural authority whom he could not subdue by argument ; but we are not informed by what means the crucifix became vocal. If it were large enough to screen behind or within it, it must have been of somewhat ampler dimensions than such symbols are ; and even then it could not easily have escaped the search of profane scepticism. There seems no way left of accounting for this notable hypothesis, than ventriloquism, — an art in which some sage historians have affirmed Dunstan to have been a proficient. The coolness of such charges must excite our amusement. Is it necessary to acquaint the reader that no intimation of this speaking crucifix is to be found in the more ancient writers ; not in the contemporary priest, nor in the biographer of St. Ethelwold, nor in that of St. Oswald, both which speak minutely of Dunstan's acts and miracles ; nor in that of St. Elphege, nor in that of St. Edith, nor in the monastic chronicles of the following age, nor in any work before that of Osbern, whose credulity is no less remarkable than his knavery. The truth is, that nobody would ever have thought of disregarding the canons of criticism, — of passing over writers nearly contemporary, to follow those much posterior, — had not the latter offered some foundation, however frail, for an attack on this calumniated archbishop.*

975. 3. But the chief charge remains yet to be noticed. Dunstan had already been accused of as many peccadilloes as could well be committed by one individual. He had been charged with whoredom†; with the pride of Satan himself‡; with hypocrisy§; with lying||; with blasphemy¶; with magical intercourse with the

* Authorities :—The Life of St. Dunstan by Osbern, as contained in the *Acta Sanctorum* of Bollandus, the *Acta Benedictinorum* of Mabillon, and the *Anglia Sacra* of Wharton; the Life of St. Edith in the two foreign collections ; and the *Chronicles* of King Edgar's reign. Mr. Turner (*Anglo-Saxons*, ii. 273.) is angry with Dr. Lingard because that historian refuses to admit the puerile legends of Osbern and his followers. It is not very usual for protestant writers to reproach the Catholic with incredulity.

† Parker, *Antiquitates*, p. 80.

‡ Carte and Henry, *passim*.

§ Hume, chap. ii.

|| Parker, Carte, Henry, &c.

¶ Southey, *Book of the Church*, vol. i.

powers of darkness* ; with theft† ; with ventriloquism, and with other harlequin exhibitions ; by some with a compound of all these, and of a few other qualities equally amiable. To crown his fame with unequalled glory ; and, if infernal dignity were to be measured by pre-eminence of guilt, to render him able to contend with Satan himself for the sceptre of the regions below, nothing was wanted but MURDER : —

“ This artifice‡, says Mr. Turner, for, unless we believe it to have been a miracle, no other name can be given to it, did not fully succeed. It was followed by another event, which, taken in conjunction with the preceding, leads the impartial mind to the strongest suspicions of its having been a scene of the most questionable character. The candid historian will always regret when the nature of the incidents compels him to infer bad motives. But some facts justify the imputation ; and the following events, unless extreme charity can believe them to have been accidental, or credulity can suppose them to have been miraculous, announce premeditated plans which deserve the harshest epithets. A council of the nobles§ was summoned at Calne. The king was absent on account of his age. || While the senators of England were conversing violently on the question then agitated, and were reproving Dunstan, he gave a short reply, which ended with these remarkable words : — ‘ I confess that I am unwilling that you should conquer : — I commit the cause of the church to the decision of Christ.’ As these words, which lead the mind to the most unfavourable inferences, were uttered, the floor and its beams and rafters gave way, and precipitated the company in the ruins to the earth below. The seat of Dunstan only was unmoved. Many of the nobles were killed upon the spot ; the others were grievously hurt by wounds, which kept them long confined. If no other achievement had revealed Dunstan’s character, would not this be sufficient to startle the unprejudiced reader into a doubt of its sanctity ? ”

* Parker, ubi supra.

† With purloining the treasure intrusted to his keeping by king Edmund.

‡ The speaking crucifix.

§ Why of *nobles* only ? Bishops, abbots, and secular clergy, were also present.

|| On account of his *youth*, surely ; but Mr. Turner’s language is seldom conventional.

Another writer is not more favourable to the primate*: —

“ Dunstan took care that the third (council), which was held at Calne, should prove decisive. The nobles, as well as the heads of both parties, attended. The king was kept away because of his youth, though he had been present at the former meetings. Beornelm, a Scotch bishop, pleaded the cause of the clergy with great ability; alleging Scripture in their behalf, and custom, and arguing upon the morality and reason of the case, against the celibacy to which, by these new laws, they were to be compelled. This speech produced a great effect, and Dunstan did not attempt to answer it: he had laid aside, says his biographer, all means excepting prayer. ‘ You endeavour,’ said he, ‘ to overcome me, who am now growing old, and disposed to silence rather than contention. I confess that I am unwilling to be overcome; and I commit the cause of his church to Christ himself, as judge.’ No sooner had these words been spoken, than the beams and rafters gave way: that part of the floor upon which the clergy and their friends were arranged fell with them, many being killed in the fall, and others grievously hurt; but the part where Dunstan and his party had taken their seats remained firm. The arch miracle-maker lived ten years to enjoy his victory,” &c.

Before we enter into an examination of these charges, we may observe, that if we denied the very existence of the council at Calne, we could scarcely be accused of rashness; and for these reasons: — No mention of it is to be found in the anonymous biography of Dunstan; nor in that by Abelard; nor in that of St. Oswald; nor in that of St. Ethelwold; nor in that of St. Elphege; nor in that of St. Edith, — in short, in no authority either contemporary or proximate to the period. The most ancient record in which it is to be found is the Saxon Chronicle, under the year 978; the next is Osbern. But when was the former written? Certainly not before the middle of the eleventh century. If the reader will be at the pains to consult the Chronicle, from page 122. to page 152.†; that is,

* Southey, *Book of the Church*. We are pained to see this distinguished writer and excellent man throw his great weight into the scale of prejudice.

† We refer to Gibson's edition; Oxford, 1692.

from the year 974 to the year 1024, he will perceive that the passage in question could not possibly have been written, we do not say by a contemporary, but by any one who lived within half a century of the period. In several passages there are manifest allusions to more recent times, to historics from which the annalist derived his information, and to traditions which were probably never consigned to writing. Assuming it to have been written about the middle of the eleventh century, and Osbern's life of Dunstan about thirty years afterwards, what dependence can be placed on them for evidence as to a fact reported to have happened near a century before, yet not mentioned by one of the many writers who preceded them? If so remarkable a tragedy—one which must have shaken the kingdom to its very foundation—really occurred, *could* it have escaped the notice of every writer prior to the annalist and Osbern? We consider this objection of so much weight, so sanctioned by one of the soundest canons of criticism, that we should be justified in rejecting altogether the relation as a legend, invented by some monk—probably by the fabulous author to whom Osbern and Eadmer were so much indebted—or as an idle report floating on the popular mind. But for the sake of argument we will admit the fact as related both by the Saxon annalist and by the precentor of Canterbury:—

“An. 978.—In this year all the chief nobility of England fell at Calne from an upper floor, except the holy archbishop Dunstan, who was standing on a beam; and some were very much maimed, and some did not escape with life.”

Here is an event related with the utmost simplicity; described purely as an accident. In the time of the chronicler there was evidently no rumour of God's judgment on the archbishop's enemies, or of his miraculous favour to that churchman. But the vulgar are apt enough to consider the events of this life as indications of the love or wrath of Heaven. How much the public feeling had changed when Osbern wrote will be apparent from the following relation:—

"During the lives of these opponents, there was no more contention; but in the time of their sons, the discord was renewed.* These, selecting as the defender of their iniquity the Scottish bishop Beornelm, — a man almost matchless both for sharpness of intellect and loquacity, — sent to the man of God, then abiding in the town called Calne; and, in an overweening spirit, proposed the scandalous subject. Dunstan, exhausted by old age and by his great labours in the church, had now bid adieu to every earthly matter except prayer. But, lest iniquity, which had formerly been humbled by a divine miracle, should now boast of a victory, he thus answered his enemies: — 'Since, in so long a space of time, you did not bring forward your charge, but seek to trouble me now, when I am old and fond of repose, I confess that I am unwilling to conquer you again.† I commit the cause of his church to Christ, the Judge!' He spoke, and what he said was confirmed by the wrath of God; for the house was immediately shaken, the floor under their feet was loosened, and his enemies fell to the ground, oppressed by the weight of the falling beams; but where the saint sat with his friends there was no ruin."

Now what do these extracts legitimately prove? Simply that an accident, natural enough where a number of men were congregated together in an upper room, was believed to have happened. That in a credulous age it should be represented by the friends of Dunstan as a judgment of Heaven on his opponents was only accordant with what we hear every day in times

* These remarkable words, which Mr. Turner wholly omits, have not been sufficiently weighed. The council of Winchester, where the crucifix was made to speak, was held in 968; that of Calne in 975. Do seven years remove one generation from the stage of life, and introduce another? If the two events happened not at these periods, when did they happen? The chronology of this idle legend is not, however, its only insuperable difficulty. The faith that can swallow it will not pay much regard to such trifles as the authority, the time, and other circumstances.

† *Fateor vos vincere nolo*. Thus boldly translated by Mr. Turner:—"I confess that I am unwilling that you should conquer me!" Mr. Southey, who evidently follows him, has,—"I confess that I am unwilling to be overcome." Wharton (*Anglia Sacra*, ii. 112.), like Mabillon (*Acta SS.* v. 681.), and the Bollandists (*Acta SS. Maii*, tom. iv. p. 372.), though all follow different MSS., has the same reading, *Fateor vos vincere nolo*; but with an impudence, of which there are few examples even in this age, he (Wharton) says, in a note, Melius Capgravius (in *Legenda Nova*, fol. 94.) Dunstan! verba sic refer! *Fateor vinci nolo*. So we are to be referred from the reading of the most ancient MSS. to the printed one of a blundering editor some hundreds of years afterwards!

The meaning of Dunstan's words is manifest:—"I am unwilling to take the trouble of overcoming you:" in other words, "I am old, feeble, and unwilling to contend with you."

much more enlightened. Man is too apt to identify his cause with the favour of Heaven ; to regard the most casual misfortunes of life, arising to his enemies, as visitations of an offended providence — a fact proved by all history and all experience. This feeling is very conspicuous in the hagiologic biographers of the Saxon period ; but it is equally so in the *Journal* of John Wesley, and the early volumes of the *Methodist Magazine*. By what perversion of justice, the unbiassed reader may well ask, is Dunstan to be held responsible for human credulity ? for that mistaken, however firm, persuasion of his countrymen, that *his* cause was that of heaven, which revenged both him and itself on their common enemies ? But this unfortunate prelate is not allowed to escape thus easily. The preceding passages from Turner and Southey boldly proclaim that the tragedy was premeditated ; that Dunstan, on the very confines of eternity, seriously planned the most diabolical deed ever devised by man ; that with the cunning and malice of an incarnate demon he resolved that his exit from the world should be graced by a holocaust of victims. The charge is so utterly opposed to all authority, all justice, all reason, that we will not attempt to refute it. We give, however, the remarks of a writer, than whom not one in the whole range of literature possesses either greater penetration in discovering, or greater impartiality in estimating, the weight of evidence : —

“ But in the heat of the debate, the floor of the room sunk under the weight of numbers: the whole assembly, except the archbishop *, who fortunately held by a beam, were precipitated to the ground ; and amidst the ruins and the confusion many were dangerously wounded, and others lost their lives. This melancholy event decided the controversy. The pious credulity of the age ascribed the fall of the floor, and the preservation of Dunstan, to the interposition of heaven ; and the clergy at length desisted from a contest, in which they believed that

* So says the *Saxon Chronicle*, the oldest authority : but Osbern's relation excepts the archbishop and *his friends*. If there were premeditated design, these friends must have been previously conscious of it, and conspirators in it. As the event must have been known to so many, it is strange that nobody blabbed it to the world, and that it should have been concealed until our own times.

both God and men were their adversaries. — Such is the plain, unvarnished history of the synod of Calne; but on this narrow basis a huge superstructure of calumny and fable has been raised by religious prejudice. Dunstan, if we may credit the recent historian of the Anglo-Saxons, harassed by the repeated attempts of the clergy, trembled for the permanency of his favourite establishments, and resolved to terminate the quarrel by the destruction of his opponents. By his order, the floor of the room destined to contain the assembly was loosened from the walls; during the deliberation the temporary supports were suddenly removed; and in an instant, the nobles, the clergy, and the other members, were promiscuously cast among the ruins; while the archbishop, secure in his seat, contemplated with savage satisfaction the bloody scene below. This is the substance of the tale which has lately been presented to the public; but I may be allowed to pause before I subscribe to its truth. The atrocity of the deed, the silence of his contemporaries, the impolicy of involving in the same fate his friends as well as his adversaries, must provoke a doubt in favour of the primate; and even those who have been taught to think disadvantageously of his character, will, at least, before they venture to condemn him, demand some evidence of his guilt. But no such evidence has been, or can be, produced. By contemporary* and succeeding writers the fall of the floor was attributed to accident, or the interposition of heaven: the sanguinary contrivance of Dunstan was a secret which, during about eight centuries, eluded the observation of every historian, and was first, I believe, revealed to the scepticism of Hume, who introduced his suspicion to the public under the modest veil of a possibility.† But suspicion has quickly ripened into certitude; and the guilt of the archbishop has been pronounced, without doubt or qualification. Nor (the omission is inexplicable) has his accuser claimed the merit of the discovery; but left his incautious readers to conclude that he had derived his information from the respectable authorities to whom he boldly appeals.‡ Yet they appear to have been ignorant of the charge, and to

* Dr. Lingard is here mistaken: by no *contemporary* author is there the slightest allusion to the subject.

† “Hume, c. 2. Should, however, any friend of archbishop Parker assign to that prelate the merit of the discovery, I shall not dispute the priority of the claim. This, at least, is certain, that he ascribed the misfortune at Calne to a conspiracy between the devil and the monks.”

‡ Malmesbury, p. 61. Florentius Wigornensis, p. 361. Simeon Dunelmensis, p. 160. These authorities are, indeed, respectable in regard to transactions happening near their own times; but as to the reputed tragedy at Calne they are of no use whatever; they merely followed Osbern and Eadmer.

have contented themselves with translating the simple narrative of the Saxon chronicle—the most faithful mirror of the times.”

We will not further pursue the life of this celebrated man, who died in 988. We have dwelt on it at some length, for three reasons:—1. Because it is intimately connected with the great change introduced into the ecclesiastical polity of this kingdom. 2. Because Dunstan is, beyond all doubt, the most controverted character in our ecclesiastical history. 3. Because the vindication of a man from popular injustice is the noblest duty of the historian. Whether the vindication we have attempted may have any effect on others we know not, and, indeed, care not; but one good result it has already had,—it has dissipated from our own minds impressions which we confess were hostile to the memory of Dunstan. On commencing the present volume, we regarded him with any thing but favour,—not, indeed, as a personification of every evil principle, but as immoderately ambitious, as hypocritical, as tyrannical and revengeful; as unscrupulous about the means he employed for the advancement of his own personal views. As we proceeded, however, we were surprised to discover, not only that there was no foundation whatever for the heavy charges brought against him, but that he possessed many virtues, which modern writers have carefully omitted to mention. True, he had his defects. That he was ambitious in his youth; that his zeal was not always guided by discretion; that he was often actuated by an enthusiasm inconsistent with sober reflection; that his behaviour to king Edwin, at the coronation, was wholly indefensible,—are facts which no candid mind will attempt to deny. But while we mention these imperfections, let us not lose sight of his virtues. His charity towards the poor; the freedom with which he reprov'd vice in high places; his defence of the feeble and the oppressed against the injustice of the powerful; the vigilance with which he watched over the conduct of his clergy; his incorruptible integrity;

his manly independence of conduct ; his own unfeigned piety, and the zeal with which he laboured to promote the piety of others ; the reformation which he effected in a dissolute and corrupted church, — will be considered titles to the admiration of posterity, however they may have been overlooked by modern writers. His noble reproof of king Edgar is not the only illustration we can exhibit of his unbending spirit, when he felt that he had high interests to defend. A nobleman of high distinction had married a lady within the prohibited degrees of kindred ; he was thrice exhorted to put her away ; he refused, and was excommunicated. He applied to the king, who exhorted the archbishop to sanction the connection ; but Dunstan only the more rigorously prohibited to the faithful all intercourse with him. He next appealed to Rome, and procured a favourable reply, probably a dispensation, from the pope, who commanded the primate to absolve him, and re-admit him into the bosom of the church. Dunstan treated the papal mandate with as little ceremony as the royal wish. “ I will obey only when I know that he is repentant. But so long as he continues in his sin, he shall not, with God’s help, be able to boast that he has set the discipline of the church at defiance, and insulted its ministers. God forbid that for the sake of any mortal man, or even for the preservation of my own life, I should transgress the law which Christ has rendered binding in his church ! ” The nobleman, astonished at his firmness, now separated from his wife, and applied for pardon before a public synod. Delighted with the evident sincerity of his repentance, Dunstan pronounced the reconciling word, raised him from the ground, and affectionately gave him the kiss of peace. Other examples we could adduce of the same inflexible adherence to principle ; but this is needless. The cause of the hostility against him in the clergy of our own church is sufficiently obvious, — the severity with which he repressed clerical marriages. In this respect his zeal cannot be approved by us ; but we must not forget that as the conservator of discipline he was bound alike by his oaths and his duty to act as he did.

And no doubt his heart was in the work. During his banishment, while in the monastery of St. Peter's at Ghent, he had seen the laxity of a whole community of canons, and their consequent expulsion. His subsequent experience confirmed the belief that if a clergyman were allowed to marry, and were compelled to provide for the support of a family, the world must occupy more of his attention than his flock, and that the surplus revenues of his benefice must go, not to the relief of the poor, but to the maintenance of his wife and children. That such revenues, after providing for the necessary wants of the clergyman, were regarded as the patrimony of the poor, from the earliest ages of the church, Dunstan well knew; and he would not allow them to be wronged. But he did not consider,—indeed, the canons of the church did not allow him to consider,—that if in this respect clerical celibacy be a good, in others it is an evil, perhaps outweighing that good. In no sense, however, does he deserve the indecent vituperation with which he has been assailed. The monstrous, and blasphemous as monstrous, legends which have been invented respecting him by his unscrupulous admirers, are, to good taste and right feeling, the most offensive and disgusting part of the relation; but is he to be blamed for the injudicious zeal, or, if the reader please, the knavery of his admirers? One thing is certain,—justice must finally triumph. It has dissipated much of the false halo which surrounded the memory of Alfred. It has proved that Richard III. was not that monster of unmixed wickedness which we had been taught to regard him. It will one day disperse the mists of prejudice from the shade of Dunstan, and exhibit him as one of the greatest and best men that ever sat in the chair of St. Augustine.*

* Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. ii. p. 273, &c. Southey, *Book of the Church*, vol. i. p. 108. *Chronicon Saxonicum*, A. D. 978. *Mendax Osbernus Vita S. Dunstani* (apud Bollandistas, Wharton et Mabillon). *Eadmerus, Vita ejusdem*, p. 215. (Wharton, vol. ii.) Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 429. Parker, *Antiquitates Britannicæ Ecclesiæ*, p. 80, &c. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ*, tom. iii. (sub annis). We have not noticed half the legends relating to Dunstan.

954 The life of *St. Elphege*, also, has been written by that
 to credulous, uncritical, and, we suspect, knavish biographer,
 1012. Osbern ; but in this instance we can be at no loss to dis-
 tinguish the true from the fabulous. Born, like most other
 Saxon saints, of noble parents, he had the advantage of
 a more liberal education than youths of inferior station.
 Though he was the peculiar object of a mother's love,
 and the heir of much worldly substance, so deeply was
 he imbued with the devotion of the times, that he re-
 solved, while yet a youth, to leave his mother, his
 inheritance, and the world. He assumed the habit
 in the solitary convent of Deerhurst, situated in the
 county of Gloucester, and poor as it was solitary. Its
 poverty, probably, rendered manual labour necessary.
 Severe, however, as it was, it was not severe enough for
 the monk, who aimed at the highest perfection of the state,
 which he could only hope to acquire by total seclusion.
 Here he should alone have to contend with the malig-
 nant enemy of mankind*, far from the assistance of
 his brethren. Accordingly, leaving the monastery, un-
 certain whither to bend his steps, he reached Bath,—
 so called, says his biographer, because warm springs
 arise for the pleasure of bathers,—and there he con-
 structed a hermitage, in which he began to lead a
 most rigorous life. The fame which was sure to
 attend ascetic observances, was, we fear, not the least
 reason why so many embraced them. He was soon
 visited by the noble and the rich, eager to profit by
 his instructions, and to make him presents. These
 presents he expended in the relief of the poor, and in
 the exercise of hospitality. Nor was he long with-
 out disciples, who, bidding adieu to the world, assumed
 the eremetical garb, and followed his discipline. A
 considerable community arose ; and none of the recluses,
 we are told, had need of reading, since all could con-
 template, in the conduct of *St. Elphege*, the duties
 which they were required to practise. Some of them,
 however, could not have been sincere converts ; they

* Singulare cum maligno hoste certamen inire contendit.

had changed their habit, not their lives. To these the saint, who well knew the trite adage that the cowl does not make the monk, was justly severe. He condemned them as liars, since they wished to appear what they were not, — since their habit betokened one thing, their hearts another. Still more strongly did he censure the vagabond hermits who, forsaking their proper sphere, — priests, for instance, who deserted their churches, — wandered from place to place, without benefiting others by their example. Society seemed to displease him : in a short time he delegated the ordinary duties of his station to a prior, reserving, however, to himself the direction of important affairs, and again secluded himself within the walls of a hermitage not far from the abbey which he had founded. But the anchorite had soon reason to blame his own imprudence. Relieved from the restraint of his presence, the monks began to indulge in propensities not over suited to their present life. They ate and drank to excess, chiefly at night, when their conduct was not likely to be observed. But though they were sure that their misdoings would not reach the notice of their abbot, they were miraculously disappointed. The chief offender suddenly died — probably of apoplexy — and the night following his interment, as St. Elphege was occupied in the service for the dead, and offering the propitiatory sacrifice, his ears were suddenly struck by strange sounds, like the cries of persons in distress, proceeding from the monastery. Conceiving that some robbers had been caught in the act of sacrilege, or that the devil was afflicting the brethren in their sleep, he arose and proceeded towards the house. And when he arrived at the door of the refectory the clamour increased. He stood for a moment astonished : on entering the room, what should he perceive but the monk just buried sitting miserably on the floor, while beings of horrid appearance were standing over him, and beating him with fiery serpents. The howls which the condemned soul uttered had no effect on the demons, who, having done

their pleasure, dragged him yelling away. The saint, weeping, began to moralise on the fate of man — how much less enviable than that of beasts. “Beasts,” he sagely observed, “cease to be afflicted when they cease to live, while man has not only sorrow in this life, but the prospect of damnation in the next.” The following morning he convoked the brotherhood, and acquainted them with what he had seen. Conscience touched all of them ; some grew pale, others wept ; some seemed terrified out of their senses, and all trembled. The more guilty confessed their sins, and prayed for a severe penance. Whether their reformation was lasting, we read not ; for the abbot was now summoned to a new sphere of action. On the death of St. Ethelwold* the two hostile parties, the canons and the monks of Winchester, struggled hard to secure that vacant dignity for one of their own order. The contest was a severe one, but we are assured it was divinely ended by St. Dunstan. That St. Andrew appeared in a dream to the primate, commanding him to interfere, so that the election might fall on the abbot Elphege, is gravely asserted by Osbern. For such interference there was no need of a celestial communication : the fame of the abbot could not have escaped the ears of Dunstan. What is certain is, that the latter persuaded both parties to delegate the choice to him ; that he sent for the abbot, and consecrated him in the cathedral of Canterbury. The reception of Elphege by the people of his diocese is graphically drawn by his biographer. As he approached Winchester, the inhabitants both of that city and of distant parts issued from the walls to meet him, chanting, *Benedictus qui venit !* They were naturally glad to receive any prelate after a vacancy, which appears to have been of some duration. At all times the bishop was the reconciler of differences, the friend of peace, the support of the poor, the terror of evil doers, the judge conjointly with the sheriff† in the court of the county or hundred. In the present case

* See p. 285. of the present volume.

† See Id. p. 53.

their joy was increased by the reputed sanctity of their new diocesan. He did not disappoint their expectations. So mild was his manner, that it won the esteem of all ; so great his beneficence, that the poor loved him ; so impartial in his administration of justice, and in his government of the church, that none could blame the purity of his purpose ; so meek and humble, that—what his biographer justly observes is rare among men—he had none to envy his reputation. In his episcopal seat he exhibited the austerities of the hermitage,—austerities which poor Osbern valued as highly at least as the most useful virtues : —

“ I have learned from those who were best acquainted with his private habits, that in winter, even during the severest frost, he would arise at midnight, while deep sleep ruled the rest of the world, and secretly repair to some place in the open air. There, with naked feet, and in his ordinary garments, he used to stand praying until the rising sun put the stars to flight, and until he felt the presence of the True Sun. And when at a late hour he entered the refectory as if to dine, he rose from table almost as empty as when he sat down ; so that it might have been said by his attendants that he had not eaten at all. So emaciated did his body become, that when celebrating mass, and raising his hands, according to custom, at the consecration, if the sun shone through the window before him, the light could be discovered through the middle of his palm.”

Let us not condemn St. Elphege because he did not rise superior to his age. If his austerities were thus lamentable, let us not forget that they were associated with the noblest virtues of the episcopal character. One of his favourite sayings, that he who neglected to relieve the poor could not be a member of Christ, will atone for much ascetic absurdity. Such effect had his exhortations to almsgiving on the rich, that they eagerly sought for objects of its exercise, and, we are told, left not a man throughout the province subject to want. This, no doubt, is an exaggeration ; but even exaggeration proves the fact, that this best of virtues was practised to an extraordinary extent. It is no bad evidence of Dunstan's heart that he laboured to make this excellent prelate his successor in the primacy. That labour, however, was

not immediately successful, owing probably to the monastic profession of Elphege, — a profession not very agreeable to the chapter of Canterbury; but in 1006 he was unanimously elevated to that dignity. He regarded it not as a post of higher honour, but as calling him to more extended duties. But a troubled period arrived; the Danes were recommencing their destructive descents on the coast, and from thence throughout most part of the island. Of the state of the kingdom at this period Osbern draws a melancholy picture. Ethelred was unwarlike and imbecile, fitter for a monk than a king; there was no patriotism, no private virtue among the people; and the military art was unknown. By the same author the character of the Danes is drawn as ferocious: ferocious it doubtless was; but he forgets to inform us that they had many injuries to avenge, especially the recent massacre of their countrymen by the despicable son of Elfrida. The coast of Kent was repeatedly ravaged, — a calamity which called forth still more conspicuously the virtues of the primate. With what money he could raise, he frequently repaired to the Danish camp, to redeem his captive flock; nor on these occasions did he refrain from preaching the Gospel to the pagans. That he made many converts, is not improbable; but their number could bear little comparison with those who still adhered to the worship of their ancient gods. A new calamity was the desertion of Edric the lieutenant of Ethelred, who, to avenge a guilty brother, recently slain by the inhabitants of Canterbury, joined the invaders, and marched with them on that devoted city. The inhabitants, resolved on a vigorous defence, placed their most valuable effects in the care of the archbishop; but when they learned the multitude of the enemy, and their threats of vengeance against him, they pathetically exhorted him to consult his safety by flight. He could, indeed, do them no good: his arms were not those of a warrior; but their affection for his person was the chief cause of their solicitation. He replied that to a servant of Christ death was a good; that

martyrdom was a thing to be desired ; and that he would not act the mercenary by fleeing when his sheep were assailed by wolves. He assembled the people, and exhorted them to be of good heart : — “ Man,” he observed, “ had nothing to fear beyond Him who could destroy soul and body.” Perhaps the city might have successfully withstood a siege, had not a traitor within the walls set fire by night to about twenty houses in different parts. The defenders hastened from the walls to save their families and effects : one of the gates was forced ; and the work of carnage commenced. Many were cut down by the sword ; many were cast into the devouring flames ; children were torn from their mother’s breasts and tossed upon the points of the enemy’s lances, — of the English no less than of the Danish enemy. Elphege, who with his monks had taken refuge in the cathedral, hastily escaped from the hands of his attendants, and throwing himself into the ranks of the pirates, exclaimed, “ Spare, spare this city ! Above all, if you are men, spare the helplessness of infancy ! Assuage your fury on me, who have always condemned your impiety and your crimes !” He was instantly seized, gagged, bound, beaten, and dragged to his cathedral to witness the fate of that venerable pile. It was still filled with the clergy, the monks, and the most devout or timid of the inhabitants, who hoped that its sanctity would be respected. Dry wood was collected and placed against the walls ; the huge pile was set on fire ; the beams and rafters were soon in flames ; and torrents of molten lead descended into the church. To escape this horrible death, the people rushed from the building, and were massacred as they appeared. Of 8000 inhabitants, 804 only were saved, in the hope that more money might be obtained for their ransom. Elphege, with the remaining captives, was next led to the northern gate. The tears of the people on beholding their venerated pontiff thus fettered and otherwise ill treated flowed profusely : as his mouth had been ungagged, he began to comfort them, when a battle-axe fell on his shoulders,

and his body was instantly bathed in blood. From the city he was dragged to the fleet, from the fleet to a horrible dungeon, dark, damp, and filled with reptiles. By the worst usage the victors hoped to make him anxious for his ransom, which they had fixed at 3000 pieces of gold. During seven months he was thus harassed, being occasionally dragged from his dungeon to see the torments and execution of his fellow-captives who were unable to purchase their liberty. But the design of the pirates was frustrated: Elphege had no money; and he refused to sign an order to the different churches of his diocese, that the treasures intended for the relief of the poor should be surrendered for his ransom. He would not, he said, purchase life on terms so disgraceful. From his infancy he had been the father of the needy: he would not, in his last days, deprive them of their resources. In similar circumstances the blessed martyr St. Laurence had hidden them; should *he* act so contrary to that example as to betray them? He was next brought before the chiefs of the army, who demanded his ransom; and, in the event of his refusal, threatened him with death. So exhausted was he by his late ill treatment, that he could not immediately reply: when he was able, he told them that he had no money, but that he had something far more valuable to offer, — the Gospel of Christ, which he pathetically exhorted them to receive. Transported with sudden fury, perhaps too with intoxication, for they had just dined, the chiefs rose from their seats, rushed upon him, and struck him with their swords to the earth, while others advancing threw showers of stones upon him. In his last agony he had strength enough to utter a prayer for himself and his murderers: — “Lord Jesus, Son of God the Highest, who came through the womb of the Virgin to save sinners, receive me, and have mercy on them!” Then raising his face a moment from the earth, he added, “Good Shepherd, defend thy flock, whom I leave to thy charge!” To end his expiring agonies, one of the Danes, whom he

had baptized, struck him with the sword, and the soul fled to its eternal rest.*

We will not further pursue the lives of Saxon saints. Such of them as were distinguished for literature we shall notice in the ensuing volume, in the chapter devoted to the intellectual branch of the subject. In the present, we have been diffuse on the Saxon period; in the next, that of the Normans and Plantagenets will more particularly occupy our attention. We now proceed to notice such particulars in the history, constitution, and character of the English church in the Saxon period as we had no opportunity of collecting during the preceding biographical sketches.

The extensive authority which pope St. Gregory conferred on Augustine appears to have been personal: it was not exercised, perhaps not claimed, by his immediate successors. But when, in 654, pope Vitalian elevated Theodore of Cilicia to the dignity vacant by the death of Deusdedit, the sixth archbishop, the same jurisdiction was revived in favour of the new primate. Theodore was a man of severe morals, and of great learning; but the consideration which, above all, led to his choice, was his extensive acquaintance with the canons, and his unbending firmness. By all the Saxon prelates he was recognised as the head of the English church. But after his death, and under his immediate successors, some of these prelates aspired to independence. The first was Egbert of York, brother to the king of Northumbria, who appealed to the pope for the restoration of the archiepiscopal honours of his see, — honours which, as we have before intimated †, were reserved to it by the decree of St. Gregory the Great. The dis-

* Mendax Osbernus, Vita S. Elphegi (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, die Aprilis 19. ; apud Wharton, Anglia Sacra, tom. ii. p. 123—141. ; et apud Mabillonium, Acta SS. Ord. S. Bened. Sæc. vi. pars i. p. 115, &c.). Chronicon Saxonum, p. 141. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicae, tom. iiii. (sub annis).

We do not notice the puerile miracles of Osbern. None are alluded to in the Saxon Chronicle; and we are more than ever convinced that this monk is a liar and a knave; that he disfigured the lives of the saints of God with his abominable inventions.

† See the commencement of the present chapter.

asters of which Northumbria had been the theatre ; the frequent invasions of the pagans, and the partial apostasy of the province, had, doubtless, forfeited the metropolitan character of York ; we may add, that it could have had no suffragans beyond the fleeting prelates of Hexham, and the remote ones of Lindisfarne. But now that tranquillity was for a season restored, and that there appeared an opening for the erection of new sees, a papal decree severed from the immediate jurisdiction of Canterbury all the sees that existed, or might hereafter exist, north of the Humber. This was a triumph to the Northumbrian king, who could not have beheld with much complacency the subordination of his bishops to the subjects of the kings of Kent. The same jealousy seized on Offa, king of Mercia, who felt that he was more powerful than either of his brother sovereigns, and who declared that his kingdom was as deserving of a metropolitan as either Northumbria or Kent. His application, too, was successful, and Lichfield was acknowledged as a spiritual metropolis by the bishops of Mercia and East Anglia. We are not told what motives induced Kenulf, the successor of Offa, to restore to the cathedral of Canterbury its jurisdiction over the central provinces of England ; but after a short opposition on the part of Leo, the reigning pontiff, the metropolitan of Lichfield descended to the rank of a suffragan bishop ; and from that period the precedence of the Kentish see has been firmly established.—Originally the Saxon dioceses were of enormous extent, nearly commensurate with the kingdoms of the heptarchy :—thus that of Winchester embraced the kingdom of the West Saxons, extending from the confines of Kent to those of British Cornwall. Mercia, extensive and populous as it was, had but one bishop ; but greater than all was the jurisdiction of the Northumbrian prelate, who, from his cathedral of Lindisfarne or York, presided over all the Christian congregations of the Saxons and Picts, from the Humber to the Forth and the Clyde. To suppose that any individual

could be equal to the government of districts so vast was absurd; yet no serious attempts were made to remedy the evil, until Theodore was invested with the primacy. The first step of that able man was to divide Mercia into five sees, — Lichfield, Leicester, Hereford, Worcester, and Synacester. The deposition of St. Wilfrid* enabled him to divide Northumbria into the dioceses of York, Lindisfarne, Hexham, and Withern. His conduct was imitated by his successor; so that within a few years after his death, seventeen bishops possessed the spiritual jurisdiction of England. Wales had its own prelates: Carlisle had also one of British race, independent of the Saxon metropolitans. Subsequently there were some variations both in the number and the seat of these sees: thus Lindisfarne was transferred to Chester-le-Street; and on the death of Tidferth, the last bishop of Hexham, that see was incorporated with Chester-le-Street, and the metropolis was subsequently transferred to Durham. But Northumbria had never its due number of prelates. This evil was felt by the Venerable Bede, who asserts that many districts had never seen their diocesan, and that thousands of Christians had never received the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands. He earnestly recommended the adoption of pope St. Gregory's plan, — that Northumbria should be divided into twelve dioceses, dependent on the metropolis of York; but no steps were seriously taken to forward the views of pope or monk. †

That, throughout the church universal, bishops were anciently elected by the clergy and people, is well known. After the establishment of Christianity, the Roman emperors interfered in the elections of the four

See his life early in the present chapter.

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cilia, p. 152. 160. 164. Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 50.

A more learned or a more judicious history than the last, is not, we repeat, to be found in the whole range of ecclesiastical literature. What is no less important, it is singularly impartial — a fact to which we bear cheerful testimony. In the composition of the following pages, we are greatly indebted to it.

great patriarchal churches ; but in the other dioceses they allowed the original form to remain unchanged. In the first volume of this work we have adverted to the interminable disputes between the Germanic emperors and the popes as to the investitures* ; and in the second we have related the practice of the Gallic church.† That practice was not uniform in either country ; but in both, and in all the nations of Europe, the usurpations of the royal power were progressive, however they might be retarded by policy or by accidental circumstances. In England, there was as little uniformity, and as much usurpation by the crown, as any where else. The kings of the Saxon states, petty as they were, were not slow to imitate the example of their continental brothers ; and, like them, they often appointed bishops, whose chief recommendation was a smooth tongue, or supple principle. But in another respect they went far beyond other monarchs ; for they expelled no less than nominated bishops, and with a caprice not often seen even among kings. Thus, Coinwalch of Wessex had nominated Agilbert to succeed Birinus, the apostle of the nation ; but Wini, a Saxon ecclesiastic, who was better acquainted with courts, so won the favour of his master, that Agilbert was commanded to resign one half of his see to the courtier. Agilbert refused to be a monarch's puppet, resigned the whole, and departed. In a short time, Wini incurred disgrace, and the former bishop was requested to return ; but he had the wisdom to refuse. — No greater misfortune could afflict a Christian community, than this dependence of the hierarchy on the crown. Ecclesiastics of real merit will not much frequent the antechambers of royalty ; and kings are not very proverbial, either for penetration or honesty, in the choice of bishops. By St. Theodore this monstrous abuse was suspended ; the choice of bishops devolved on the national synods, presided by himself, and probably by his immediate successors.

* Vol. I. p. 150, &c.

† Vol. II. p. 154, &c.

But that this regulation was of no long continuance, appears from the fact,* that in most churches the ancient canonical mode of election again prevailed. After the establishment of the English monarchy, the crown resumed its usurpations. At first it was content with the investiture of the person elected by the chapter. But it presumed to *recommend* a suitable candidate; and when this innovation was patiently endured — and a patience something like slavishness has ever been the characteristic of the clergy — it put the seal to its iniquity by nominating to the vacant dignity, without so much as condescending to consult the lawful electors.*

In the Saxon, as in other branches of the church universal, the hierarchy consisted of seven ascending orders, under the rank of bishop. 1. The *ostiary* who had the custody of the gate, and the direction of the bells. 2. The *lector*, who read the lessons. 3. The *exorcist*, whose duty it was to cast out devils. 4. The *acolyte*, who held the lights when the Gospel was read, or the sacred mysteries were consecrated. 5. The *sub-deacon*, who handed the sacred vessels to, and waited on, the deacon. 6. The *deacon*, who laid the oblations on the altar, who read the Gospel of the day, who baptized infants, and delivered the holy eucharist to communicants after it had been consecrated by the presbyter. The deacon was the first ecclesiastic on whom celibacy was compulsory; the five orders below him might marry, but never could attain the deacon's rank without separating from their wives. 7. The *presbyter*, or priest, who was at the head of the church, had to perform the higher duties of the ministry, — to consecrate the host, and to preach. Finally, the bishop had to ordain presbyters, to confirm children, to consecrate churches, and to watch over the observance of the ecclesiastical laws.†

* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. iii. cap. 7., lib. iv. cap. 28., lib. v. cap. 8. 18. Wilkins. *Concilia*, tom. i. p. 46. Malmesbury, *De Pontificibus*, lib. iii. p. 157. Ingulphus *Croylandensis*, *Historia*, p. 32. 39. 63. *Chronicon Saxonicum*, p. 157. 162. Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 55, &c.

† *Liber Canonum Ecclesiasticorum* (apud Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonice*, p. 155.).

The *government* of the Anglo-Saxon church does not appear to have been very efficient. 1. The bishops, indeed, had their authority sanctioned by the canons, and twice every year they were required to convoke a synod, which took cognisance of matters either exceeding their individual power, or demanding general co-operation. In them, too, each parish clergyman was expected to report the state of religion within his cure; to expose the difficulties with which he had to contend; to suggest whatever he might judge necessary for the well-being of his flock; to denounce hardened, especially powerful, offenders; in short, the local business of each see was transacted at these meetings; and on the suggestions which were there proposed, applications were frequently made to a superior authority for new regulations, of a nature more general than lay within the power of an episcopal synod. But the best forms are useless, unless they are animated by a corresponding spirit. The bishops were too distant, their dioceses were too extensive, to allow them that personal and minute superintendence over the rural clergy, which the precaution of discipline, and even clerical decorum, demanded. The perpetual vicissitudes of the times; the turbulence of the people; the inefficiency of law; the insecurity of person or substance; the influence of example, were fatal to the zeal, often to the morals of the clergy. Of this fact there is abundant evidence in the canons of such councils as have descended to us. Still these synods were useful, and for a reason which most of our historians have overlooked. On the termination of the ordinary business of the session, each formed itself into a court of judicature for the trial and decision of all disputes between clergymen. During these disputes, the laity were excluded; but on their readmittance they were not only authorised, they were invited, to state whatever complaints they might have against their parochial minister. 2. The national councils, which were always convoked by the primate, consisted not merely of bishops, but of abbots and of

the more distinguished among the ecclesiastics of each diocese. The latter, however, appear to have attended as advisers only, as sometimes possessing a deliberative voice, but never the right of suffrage. This higher assembly watched over the purity of faith, no less than the maintenance of discipline ; and to them each prelate was accountable for the proper discharge of his duties. But in human affairs the most salutary regulations are often evaded or defied ; and power will often decide where these obligations have nothing beyond conscience to enforce them. Hence the fathers of councils were frequently compelled to invoke the secular arm for the execution of their decrees, especially for the punishment of the disobedient. By degrees the civil power usurped the spiritual : the witenagemot being solicited to chastise such as despised the observance of Lent, such as neglected to baptize their children, or to confess their sins at certain periods to their spiritual director, soon considered ecclesiastical penalties as much its province as those incurred by a violation of civil law. Of this fact the laws of the Saxon states are filled with proofs. Thus, if a man neglected to baptize within the first month, he paid a fine of thirty shillings ; if the child died after that period, without the regenerating rite, his whole property was forfeited to the bishop's treasury, to be employed for the relief of the poor, the repairs of churches, and the education of candidates for holy orders. By degrees, there was scarcely a commandment in the Decalogue, the violation of which did not fall within the cognisance of the civil tribunals. In fact, civil and ecclesiastical functions were strangely blended. If the king and thanes were thus permitted to enforce canonical penalties, and to legislate for the church, it is equally certain that the bishops were allowed to legislate for no less than to judge the laity. No witenagemot could be held without them ; and in the county courts they presided with the ealdorman and high sheriff. From an anecdote in Eadmer, we learn that

they also presided in the court of the hundred ; or, at least, that in virtue of their judicial character, they could, like the ealdorman, summon a court in whatever part of their diocese they happened to be. "One day," says that biographer, "St. Dunstan having under safe custody three criminals convicted of coining false money, enquired of the people whether justice should not be done on them. As the day was a high festival, and the primate was about to celebrate mass, the reply was that justice had better be deferred to some other day. 'Not so,' said the stern prelate. 'I know of no crime more injurious to society than the one committed by these men ; nor will I approach the altar until they have suffered the penalty decreed by the laws. My conduct may seem cruel, but God knows my motive. I have a duty to fulfil towards the widow, the orphan, the poor, who have been injured by these criminals : I must not, by false notions of mercy, remit or suspend the legal penalty ; for, by so doing, I encourage others 'to the crime.'" Eadmer, however, informs us that his heart belied his words ; that he wept while the malefactors suffered the legal punishment, the loss of their heads ; but that when justice was done, he washed his face, and advanced with a more cheerful face to the altar. 3. Superior to the national councils was the jurisdiction of the popes. On this subject there has been much absurd dispute by men more anxious for the independence of the established church than for the interests of truth. It is, indeed, true that the British church was not dependent on, perhaps not even in communion with, the see of Rome. The bishop of St. David's exercised a metropolitan jurisdiction over the rest of the Welch bishops, long after the invasion of the Saxons ; and down to the twelfth century it was extremely difficult for the Norman princes to extend the primacy of the archbishop of Canterbury over the prelates of that principality. But the British is not the Saxon church. From the moment in which he received his mission, Augustine was

indisputably subject to the see of Rome, from which he derived the plenitude of his authority, and which, as we have before seen, he was careful to consult with all the humility and all the reverence due to a supreme tribunal. His example was imitated by his immediate successors, by St. Theodore, by all the English primates down to the Norman invasion, who received from him the pallium; and the same filial obedience was professed by all the suffragans, all the clergy, all the monks of the island. The pope, says Bede, *totius ecclesiæ caput eminentissimum*; and Alcuin calls him *caput ecclesiarum Christi*. In fact, the whole of our ecclesiastical history proves that his influence was perpetually exercised in some one of the following points of discipline:—In the conferring of the pallium; in the establishment, extension, or restoration, of archiepiscopal sees; in the confirmation of royal grants, of monastic privileges, and of metropolitan elections; in the enforcement of canonical discipline; in the revision of national councils; in hearing appeals; and, on extraordinary occasions, in transmitting legates to convene councils for the restoration of discipline. Of all these abundant proof may be found in the *Concilia* of Wilkins, no less than in the Anglo-Saxon writers, from Bede to Elfric. — That, in the face of such evidence, especially of the frequent appeals of St. Wilfred and other prelates, the assertion could be made that the English church was independent of Rome, might raise our astonishment, had not experience taught us how rare a thing is research; how prone are writers to follow some preceding guide, even when that guide has been proved to lead astray; how strong the force of prejudice; and, what is still worse than all, how little honesty is to be found among religious polemics. Whether the supremacy of the pope were an evil or a good, does not affect the question: whatever may be the opinion of the historian, he is bound to record the fact, however that fact be opposed to his wishes. In many cases we believe it to have been a good, but in

some it was unquestionably an evil. Thus, when the popes refused to transmit the pallium to the archbishop elect, who was consequently compelled to visit Rome for the purpose of receiving it, their motive was a proper one. They knew that the see of Canterbury had been conferred on unworthy subjects, on mere favourites at court, and they resolved that no archbishop elect should enter on his functions until he had undergone an examination before them; until his learning and orthodoxy were proved equal to the dignity. But if ignorant or immoral men, whose only merit was their birth, or favour, were now excluded from the primacy, the mischief was that every archbishop elect was at first expected, and even compelled, to take a considerable present in his hands. The court of Rome has seldom neglected its pecuniary interests. During the middle ages, at least, it exhibited a rapacity little consistent with its character; and its conduct in this respect was often so indecent, as to call forth the loud murmurs of the people; often the indignant remonstrances of kings. But murmurs and remonstrances, whether from clergy or laity, were received with little attention, until Canute the Great, in a pilgrimage to Rome, prevailed on the pontiff to consent that nothing beyond personal attendance should be exacted from future metropolitans.*

The *revenues* of the Anglo-Saxon church is a subject that may gratify a passing curiosity. 1. The most ancient were donations of land; land was the usual reward of military service; and the same mode of subsistence was not unreasonably allotted to the servants of the altar. That these donations commenced with the very introduction of Christianity, is evident from the example of Ethelbert, who abandoned Canterbury and its dependencies to the missionaries; who, in a

* Authorities: — Wilkin, *Concilia*; *Chronicon Saxonicum*; Eadmer, *Vita S. Dunstani*, and of the other saints in the collection of Mabillon and Bellandus; Wilkins, *Leges Saxonice*; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*; Epistolæ S. Bonifacii, necnon Alcuini; Malmesbury, *De Pontificibus*; and Lingard, *Antiquities*, in places far too numerous to be cited.

spirit scarcely less munificent, endowed the church of Rochester, and assisted Sabert of Essex in the endowment of the new see of London. In all the other Saxon kingdoms the same policy prevailed. Thus Cynegils of Wessex conferred Dorchester on Birinus, and his successor bestowed on the church of Winchester all the lands lying within a radius of seven miles from the walls of that city. To the church of Selsey, the whole island, containing eighty-seven hides, with 250 slaves, was attached by king Edilwalch; and that St. Oswald, with other sovereigns of Northumbria, was equally liberal, may be inferred from the wealth of the prelates in that province. After the institution of parishes*, local churches were endowed with equal avidity; and as for monasteries, the charters found in the monastic churches, and in the "Monasticon" of Dugdale, sufficiently prove the piety of the more ancient Saxons. To us the rapidity with which religious foundations were so liberally endowed is a cause of great surprise; we do not believe that any other country can produce a parallel to it. But in these donations other peculiarities must be noticed:—

"The piety of the convents was seldom content with the mere donation of their property; and the value of the present was generally enhanced by the immunities which they annexed to it. The tenure of lands among the Anglo-Saxons had been established on nearly the same principles as in the other northern nations; and each estate subjected its proprietor to the performance of several duties to his superior lord. But most of the clerical and monastic possessions were soon discharged from every servile and unnecessary obligation.† By a transition easy to the human mind, they were considered as the property, not of men but of God; and to burden them with the services which vassals were compelled to render to their superiors, was deemed a profanation and a sacrilege. A just distinction, however, was drawn between the claims of individuals and those of the public; and while the former were cheerfully abandoned, the latter were strictly exacted from the ecclesiastical no less than the lay proprietor. To repair the roads and bridges, to contribute towards the maintenance

* See page 233. of the first volume.

† Wilkins, Leges, p. 57. 60.

of fortifications, and to furnish an equitable proportion of troops in the time of war, were services so essential to the national prosperity, that from them no exemption could be granted. Such was the solemn declaration of Ethelbald, king of Mercia * ; but other princes were not always guided by the same policy ; and unless some charters of ancient date have been fabricated in more modern times, we must believe that several monasteries were emancipated from every species of secular service, and permitted to enjoy the protection, without contributing to the exigencies of the state." †

That many, perhaps most monasteries, were exempt from secular service, and consequently that this, at least, is no ground for suspecting the genuineness of the charters, we have before shown. Had not such been the case, how account for the eagerness with which secular monasteries were established ? Every thane, who felt the usual services to be onerous, had only to pretend great anxiety for his soul, to solicit permission to endow some monastery with his possessions ; assume the title of abbot ; and a royal charter soon extended the ecclesiastical privileges to them. He was not compelled to forsake the habits or the pleasures of life ; but, surrounded by a company of bottle companions, denominated monks, his days might pass as profligately as if he had never left the court. Neither the remonstrances of the Venerable Bede, nor the condemnation of councils, could extirpate this class ; the secular abbots, powerful alike by their riches and their connections, continued to subsist until the invasions of the Danes, when the true, no less than the pretended, monasteries were given to the flames. To proceed with the curious subject of ecclesiastical immunities and privileges : —

“ In addition to these immunities, others, equally honourable to themselves, and more beneficial to the public, were enjoyed by the principal of the clerical and monastic bodies. The king who erected a church or monastery was urged by devotion, sometimes, perhaps, by vanity, to display his mu-

* Wilkins, *Leges*, p. 100.

† Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 80.

nificence ; and the distinctions which he lavished on its inhabitants seemed to reflect a lustre on the reputation of their founder. The superior was frequently invested, by the partiality of his benefactor, with the civil and criminal jurisdiction ; and, throughout the domain attached to his church, he exercised the right of raising tolls on the transport of merchandise, of levying fines for breaches of the peace, of deciding civil suits, and of trying offenders within his courts.* These important privileges, at the same time, improved his finances, and peopled his estates. The authority of the clerical was exercised with more moderation than that of the secular thanes : men quickly learned to prefer the equity of their judgments to the hasty decisions of warlike and ignorant nobles ; and the prospect of tranquillity and justice encouraged artificers and merchants to settle under their protection. Thus, while the lay proprietors reigned in solitary grandeur over their wide but unfruitful domains, the lands of the clergy were cultivated and improved ; their villages were crowded with inhabitants ; and the foundations were laid of several among the principal cities in England." †

All this is strictly true : the separation, under the Norman princes, of the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals ; the banishment of the bishop or abbot from the ordinary courts, was received as any thing but a boon by the people. A very natural question may, indeed, arise,—how could these ecclesiastical judges attend to the more peculiar duties of their vocation?

" That spirit of liberality which distinguished the first converts was inherited by many of their descendants. In every age of the Saxon dynasty we may observe numerous additions made to the original donations ; and the records of different churches have carefully preserved the names and motives of their benefactors. Of many, the great object was to support the ministers of religion, and, by supporting them, to contribute to the service of the Almighty. Others were desirous to relieve the distresses of their indigent brethren ; and with this view, they confided their charities to the distribution of the clergy, the legitimate guardians of the patrimony of the poor. A numerous class was composed of thanes, who had acquired opulence by a course of successful crimes, and had deferred the duty of restitution until the victims of their

* Gale, *Quindecim Scriptores*, p. 318. 320. 323. 490. 512. Wilkins, *Leges*, tom. i. p. 80. 177. 256.

† Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 81.

injustice had disappeared. These were frequently induced, towards the decline of life, to confer, as a tardy atonement, some part of their property on the church; and when they had neglected it, their neglect was generally compensated by the pious diligence of their children and descendants. To these motives may be added the want of heirs, the hope of obtaining spiritual aid from the prayers of the clergy, gratitude for the protection which the church always offered to the unfortunate, and a wish to defeat the rapacity of a powerful adversary; all of which contributed, in a greater or less degree, to augment the possessions of the ecclesiastics. Had the revenue arising from these different sources been abandoned to the judgment or caprice of the incumbents it might frequently have been abused; and the abuses would probably have relaxed the zeal of their benefactors. But this evil had been foreseen, and in some measure prevented, by the wisdom of Gregory the Great. According to a constitution which that pontiff sent to the missionaries*, the general stock was divided into four equal portions. Of these, one was allotted to the bishop for the support of his dignity; another was reserved for the maintenance of the clergy; a third furnished the repairs of the church, and the ornaments of religious worship; and the last was devoted to the duties of charity and hospitality. It formed a sacred fund, to which every one who suffered under the pressure of want or infirmity, was expected to apply, without the fear of infamy, or the danger of a repulse."†

But if the church was thus amply endowed, let us not suppose that there were no limits to individual bounty, or that its possessions were invariably secure. In the first place, no land could be thus bequeathed without the sanction of the crown; nor, as the property was henceforth to lie in mortmain, was that sanction often conferred without a valuable present. This, we mean, was the case at the more advanced period; for originally there was no restraint on the benefactions of piety. Again, where former kings had been too liberal, and where the royal necessities were now pressing, ecclesiastical domains were frequently invaded by the resistless power of the monarch, and incorporated a second time with those of the crown. The nobles were not slow to imitate the conduct of the king,

* See on this subject the sketch of St. Augustine.

† Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 82.

generally with equal success; for though excommunication was at one period dreadful enough, in another it seemed to have lost its terrors. Often the incumbent or abbot, with the view of saving one part, surrendered the other to the claimants, or paid an annual equivalent. In the third place, — and this is the most extraordinary fact, — the very prelates and abbots deliberately contributed to the spoliations of their possessions, by the granting to their kindred, friends, or retainers, certain portions of land. There were, indeed, conditions in such grants; military service or aid in case of need, and the reversion, after a lapse of years, of the territory thus granted to the cathedral or monastery. But how was this restitution to be enforced? We know that it was often attempted, but only to be abandoned. Thus, when an abbot of Croyland, to enable his brother to have a seat in the witenagemot, conceded to that brother, from the estates of the monastery, a portion sufficient to qualify him for that enviable distinction, though the monks subsequently redeemed it, they were but partially successful. Lastly, war was a grievous scourge to the church. If the lands of an ecclesiastic were not forcibly occupied, they were so ravaged as to leave nothing for the support of the incumbent. — 2. But lands were not the only resource of the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics. In the primitive church, the voluntary offerings of the faithful sufficed for its support; and even after a legal measure of universal application had been adopted for the same purpose, the stream of individual bounty, however it might be diminished, was not wholly dried up. Down to the close of the tenth century, we read that the presents of our Saxon ancestors were sometimes of great value. 3. A less fleeting and more effectual resource was that of tithes, which, under the Mosaic economy, God himself rendered obligatory, and which Christian sovereigns were at length persuaded to adopt, as the least oppressive means of supporting a numerous body of men. When this institution was introduced into England,

cannot be exactly defined ; the introduction was, perhaps, coeval with that of Christianity itself ; for writers of the eighth century, such as Egbert of York, and St. Boniface of Mentz, speak of tithes as an old regulation in our national church. Here, again, we borrow the words of one who has made the Saxon church his peculiar study, and whose acquaintance with the subject is more accurate and intimate than that of any other writer.

“ Men are not often tempted to make pecuniary sacrifices from the sole motive of duty ; and as the number of the clergy was small, and their wants were liberally supplied by the munificence of the converted princes, it is probable that, for several years, their pretensions were generally waived, or feebly enforced. The institution, however, of parochial churches imperiously required an augmentation of the number of pastors ; and, to provide for their support, the payment of tithes was, before the close of the eighth century, severally commanded by civil and ecclesiastical authority in the council of Calcuith. The regulations which were then adopted, at the recommendation of the papal legates, received many improvements from the piety or the policy of succeeding legislators. The obligation was declared to extend to every species of annual produce, even to the profits of merchandise and of military service ; and, that avarice might not shelter itself under the pretext of ignorance, the time of payment was carefully ascertained — the festival of Pentecost, for the tithe of cattle, and that of Michaelmas, or All Saints, for the tithe of corn. Censures and penalties were denounced against the man who presumed to withhold the property of the church. His produce of the year was divided into ten equal parts, of which one was given to the minister, four were forfeited to the proprietor of the land, and four to the bishop ; and the execution of this severe law was entrusted to the vigilance of those who were to profit by it, — the curate, the lord of the manor, the bishop’s reeve, and the king’s reeve.” *

This punishment was so severe, that few would wish to incur it. Incidentally it acquaints us with an important fact ; that the ordinary profits of a labourer’s industry amounted to one-half the gross produce he

* Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 88. This severe law is to be found in *Leges Ecclesiasticæ Regis Eadgari* (apud Wilkins, 245.).

raised : that the church had one part, his landlord four. To tithes in the abstract little objection could be raised, if those who paid it were of the dominant faith. But on what principle of equity, on what pretext of decency, he, who is not of that faith, can be required to support its ministers in addition to his own, especially if that dominant church scarcely numbered a moiety of the population, would probably puzzle the advocates of an oppressive system to explain. 4. But in the Anglo-Saxon times there were still other resources to the ecclesiastics, some of which do little credit to religion : —

“ 1. Within fifteen days after the festival of Easter, a donation, probably of one silver penny for every hide of arable land, was exacted under the appellation of *plough-alms*, as an acknowledgment that the distribution of the seasons was in the hands of the Almighty, and to implore his blessing on the future harvest. 2. At the feast of St. Martin, a certain quantity of wheat, sometimes of other grain, was offered on the altar as a substitute for the oblations of bread and wine, which were formerly made by the faithful, as often as they assisted at the sacred mysteries. It was distinguished by the name of *kirk-shot*, and was assessed according to the rate of the house inhabited by each individual at the preceding Christmas. By the laws of Ina, whoever refused to pay it was amerced forty shillings to the king, and twelve times the value of the tax to the church ; and during the next three centuries, though the latter of these penalties remained stationary, that which was paid into the royal treasury progressively increased, till it amounted to three times the original sum. 3. Thrice in the year, at Candlemas, the vigil of Easter, and All Saints, was paid the *leot-shot*, or a certain quantity of wax, of the value of one silver penny for each hide of land. The object of this institution was to supply the altar with lights during the celebration of divine service. 4. The only fee which the parochial clergy were permitted to demand for the exercise of their functions, was the *soul-shot*, or retribution in money for the prayers said in behalf of the dead. By different laws it was ordered to be paid while the grave remained open, and to the clergy of that church to which the deceased had formerly belonged. The aggregate amount of all these perquisites comprised in each parish a fund which was called the *patrimony* of the minister, and which was devoted to nearly the same purposes as the revenues of the cathedral churches. After two thirds had been deducted for the support of the clergy and the re-

pairs of the building, the remainder was assigned to the relief of the poor and of strangers. In a country which offered no convenience for the accommodation of travellers, frequent recourse was had to the hospitality of the curate; and in the vicinity of his residence a house was always open for their reception, in which, during three days, they were provided with board and lodging at the expense of the church.”*

The preceding taxes, which in their origin were voluntary, and grew compulsory, were sufficiently vexatious. The giver, however, had the consolation of knowing that his bounty was applied to the best uses. But there were other drains on the substance of the Anglo-Saxons, who appear to have had a wonderful taste for lavishing it on the church,—drains, the application of which must have surely been less approved. On their way to Rome, royal and noble pilgrims sometimes made considerable donations to foreign monasteries. Thus, that of St. Denis had extensive estates on the coast of Sussex; several churches in Armorica were supported by Saxon bounty; Alfred enriched Rheims; and Canute the two great establishments of St. Omers. But more important than all these were the gifts offered on their arrival in the eternal city. Thus, Anastasius tells us how Ethelwulf, during a year's residence in that ordinary resort of the pious, distributed the great treasures which he had brought from England. On Benedict III. he bestowed a crown of pure gold, four pounds in weight, with two cups and two images of the same precious metal, a valuable sword, four silver dishes gilt with gold, several albs, curtains, and other costly things. In the church of St. Peter he made considerable presents of gold to the nobility and clergy, and of silver to the people of Rome.—These charities were occasional; the *remescot*, or Peter's pence, was perpetual, and it was one of the most odious of the many compulsory payments made by our ancestors for the pretended interests of religion. It consisted of a silver penny, paid by every family whose annual rent amounted to thirty. Its origin is wrapped

* Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 89.

in some obscurity. That Ina was not the originator, may be inferred from the silence of Bede: that it was Offa is not impossible; that it was Ethelwulf is more probable. The obligation, indeed, to pay an annual sum, of 360 mancuses, to St. Peter's church, may be traced to the time of Offa, who rendered it binding on his successors; but there is reason to believe it was often evaded by them, until Ethelwulf released the crown from it, and imposed it on the people, in the manner we have mentioned. We find the existence of this hateful impost recognised by the laws from the time of Alfred. As that monarch carefully remitted *the royal alms* to Rome, we may infer that it was in his time obligatory on the king only: but the expression is rather a name than a reality; for if the king had to pay it, he would not fail to raise it on his subjects. From the time of his successor Edmund, it was evidently borne by the people alone. The time of payment was restricted to any of the five weeks intervening between the feast of St. Peter and the first day of August; and a heavy penalty was inflicted on the man who attempted to evade it.*

The privilege of *sanctuary* was fully recognised in the Saxon church. This institution is more ancient than is suspected by most readers. It existed anterior to all historic records: it was sanctioned by Moses, who selected his cities of refuge, where the involuntary homicide might be secure from his pursuers. As it had always existed among the pagan nations, the new converts, from the time of Constantine the Great, transferred it from the temples to the Christian churches. If it was not originally approved, it was tolerated by succeeding emperors, until Theodosius extended it to every ecclesiastical edifice, even to the habitations of the clergy. To the

* Authorities: — Wilkins, *Concilia Magnæ Britanniae*; necnon *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae* (in a multitude of places). To these must be added, Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*; the *Chronicon Saxonum*; Ingulphus *Croylandensis*, *Historia*; Malmesbury, *De Pontificibus*; the *Monasticon Anglicanum*; Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*; Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiae Anglo-Sax.*; and others, in passages too numerous to be specified. But more than all, we are indebted to Lingard, *Antiquities*, ubi supra.

Saxons, as to the other nations of Germanic origin, it was doubtless a blessing. Their ferocity had been softened, but not extirpated, by Christianity,—a fact on which we have sufficiently dwelt in the preceding volume of this compendium.* The provisions of all the Saxon legislators prove how difficult, we may add, how impossible, it was, totally to eradicate the barbarous custom of private revenge. Every man conceived that the sword of justice was, in many cases, his appropriate weapon, and ought not to be transferred to the public magistrate: in fact, the right of individual redress was solemnly sanctioned by the custom of all the tribes of northern Europe; where not only whole families, but whole villages, armed in a private quarrel; where civil war, on a considerable scale, followed the revenge of a single homicide—for, the longer the strife was perpetuated, the more bitter would be the animosity, the more numerous the hostile parties. It became evident that, if the national existence was to be preserved, private war must be abolished, and the duty of revenge transferred to the magistrate. Hence the system of pecuniary compensation, which is the basis of all the Germanic codes. But customs are more powerful than laws; the latter, if not vigorously enforced by an authority always at hand—and neither vigour nor authority attended those of our ancestors—will be openly violated. But if the laws were often weak, religion was not. The feeble or the unfortunate culprit was sure of a refuge in the house of God; but he was not sure of impunity. A certain time only was allowed, till his friends could prove his innocence; or, if guilty, engage to pay the pecuniary compensation; and, at its expiration, if neither were done, he was delivered to the officers of justice. Originally the time was three days: it was successively extended to a week, to nine days, to an indefinite period, to be shortened or protracted at the pleasure of the king. This protection was not generally awarded to all criminals; it could not be claimed by

* See especially pages 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 152, 153.

the thief who had repeatedly claimed it, nor by the rebel: both might be dragged from the very altar to receive the punishment of their crimes. There were, however, a few churches which, by especial favour, had the privilege of saving the life of every fugitive, whatever the enormity of his guilt; in this case, his prosecutor was compelled to accept a pecuniary compensation; but he still appears to have been liable to every other punishment—to stripes, bonds, pillory, even mutilation of limb; to any thing, in short, *salvâ animâ*. The churches of York, Beverley, Ramsey, and Westminster, were of this number; but superior to them all was the abbey of Croyland. Not only the precincts of that abbey, but the island and the waters which surrounded it, had the privilege of sanctuary: the line of demarcation, drawn twenty feet from the edge of the lake, effectually stopped the pursuit of justice. The criminal had only to swear fealty to the abbot, and he might laugh at the rage of his pursuers; but if he ever ventured beyond the prescribed bounds, without a written permission, he again became obnoxious to death. After the destruction of this magnificent monastery by the Danes—an event which we have related at length*,—and its restoration by the chancellor Turtetul, king Edred offered to revive the ancient privilege; but that virtuous and able man, knowing how monstrously it had been abused, declined the offer, and insisted that the monastery should only be invested with the ordinary right of asylum.†

Another institution, the *Peace of the Church*, originated in kindred motives of humanity. On every Sunday and every holiday, on every day during Lent and Advent, feuds were suspended: on these days, which were peculiarly consecrated to the service of God, the hostile might meet in safety, and, if they pleased, amicably

* See page 242. of the present volume.

† Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*, p. 15. 35, &c.; necnon Concilia, p. 176. 181. Ingulphus Croylandensis, *Historia*, p. 40. Ducange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis*, voc. *Sanctuarium*. Wilkins, *Glossarium*, voc. *Fridstole*, p. 403. Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 92, &c.

converse under the sacred mantle of the church. That such an institution, the wisest and most humane on record, would often lead to the permanent reconciliation of the parties, is undoubted; we may add, that none were permitted to approach the tribunal of penance, or the sacerdotal altar, who did not from their hearts forgive the deepest wrongs they might have received. Subsequently, the invisible but all-powerful ægis of the church was thrown over the man who hastened to public worship, who obeyed the summons of a bishop, who travelled to an episcopal synod or national council. Severe was the chastisement of the man who presumed to violate this ecclesiastical privilege—a violation regarded as a crime of the blackest dye. This, with another privilege to which we have before alluded*,—the right of sanctuary recognised in the royal palace, and the *pax regis* within a certain distance from the place where the king might happen to abide,—will be remembered to the honour of the Saxons, or rather to that of the church, while human records exist. †

The *sacraments* of the Anglo-Saxons, both as to their number and nature, have, like most other things, been made the subject of controversy between the two rival churches; yet, if it be examined by any impartial reader, he will perceive that they speak a plain and uniform language. As laymen, we can have no professional bias, and we write what we are sure is the truth, whether it meet the approbation of the one party or the other. I. Within thirty days after its birth, every infant was ordered to be regenerated in the waters of *baptism*; and heresy, as we have before observed, was the penalty of the parent who neglected this most necessary rite. One sponsor only appears to have answered for the faith and future obedience of the child. To modern readers it may appear somewhat singular that the eucharist was administered to the infant immediately after the rite; yet that such was the

* See page 40. of the first volume.

† Wilkins, *Leges*, p 109, 110. 197. 199. Lingard, *ubi supra*.

fact during seven consecutive days — the child during that period being clad in white garments, emblematical of inward purity — is certain from the testimony of Alcuin and Elfric. The infant was now a member of Christ; and, as such, entitled to all the graces of the mystical union. As he grew up, he had access to the same means of purification from sin.*

— II. But what was the opinion entertained of the *eucharist* by our Saxon ancestors, and under what form was it administered? — 1. The language employed on this subject by the Anglo-Saxon writers is certainly very strong. Thus Bede: — “In celebrating the mass, we again immolate to God, for the profit of our souls, the sacred body and the precious blood of the Lamb by which we have been redeemed from our sins.”† The council of Calcuith orders, that, where relics could not be procured, the eucharist should be preserved in lieu of them, since it is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.‡ “It is sufficient for a priest to offer one sacrifice in the day, because Christ only once suffered, and redeemed the world §,” — words which evidently involve the idea of a sacrifice, and of Christ’s presence in it. In the pontifical of Egbert, the bishop is directed to invoke the influence of God on the priest he ordains, that the latter might be able to transform the elements into the body and blood of Christ. || The vessel in which the eucharist was contained was called the bearer of Christ’s body ¶, a new sepulchre for it.** The corporale is a piece of fine linen, in which the body and

* Concilium Calchuthense (held 785), cap. ii. (apud Wilkins, *Concilia*, i. 146.). Alcuinus, *Opera*, ed. Duchesne, par. ii. Elfrici *Epistolæ*, p. 172. (apud Wilkins, *Leges Ang. Sax.*)

† “Missarum solemnias celebrantes, corpus sacrosanctum et preciosum Agni sanguinem, quo à peccatis redempti sumus, denuo Deo in profectum nostræ salutis immolamus.” — *Opera*, tom. vii. p. 6.

‡ “Et si alias reliquias invenire non potest, tamen hoc (corpus Christi) maxime proficere potest, quia corpus et sanguis est Domini nostri Jesu Christi.” — *Syn. Cal.* cap. ii. (apud Wilkins, *Concilia*, i. 169.).

§ “Et sufficit sacerdoti unam missam in unâ die celebrare, quia Christus simul passus est, et totum mundum redemit.” — *Excerpt. Egb.* 55. (Wilkins, i. 104.).

|| “Ut per obsequium plebis tuæ corpus et sanguinem Filii tui immaculati benedictione transformet.” — *Martene*, ii. 353.

¶ “Corporis Domini nostri gerulum.” — *Ibid.*

** “Hoc vasculum corporis Christi novum sepulchrum.” — *Ibid.*

blood of Christ was consecrated, and in which they were covered and wrapped.* And the consecration of the altar is said to consist in the secret virtue by which the elements chosen for the sacrifice are converted into the body and blood of the Redeemer; by which they are transformed, though in a manner invisible, into the sacred host of the Lamb; that, as the Word was made flesh, so the nature of the offering, being blessed, may be turned into the substance of the Word, and that what was before bread may here be made eternal life.† We may smile at the tale related by Bede, that a youth being taken captive, bound and committed to prison, when his brother, a priest, believing him to have fallen in battle, offered up a daily mass for his soul, his chains, through the efficacy of the sacrifice, fell from his body‡; but we are compelled to believe, even from this legend, that the Anglo-Saxons understood Christ to be immolated on the altar. In many other passages of the same writer the real presence and immolation are distinctly affirmed, as the “oblation of the saving victim.” § The Saxon homilies are not less explicit: — “Daily is his passion renewed by the mystery of the holy husel at the holy mass.” || — “Without, they seem bread and wine, both in appearance and in taste; yet after consecration they are truly Christ’s body and blood, through a ghostly mystery.” And we may observe that the same opinions were entertained by the Scottish ecclesiastics. Thus Cuminius, in his life of Columba, calls the mass “sacrificale mysterium,” “sacræ oblationis obsequia,” “sacræ eucharistiæ mysteria,” “sacrosancti sacrificii mysteria.” ¶ Thus Adamnan,

* “Hæc linteamina in usum altaris tui ad consecrandum super ea, sive ad tegendum involvendumque corpus et sanguinem Filii tui.” — *Martene*, p. 255.

† “Quod electas ad sacrificium creaturas in corpus et sanguinem Redemptoris virtus secreta convertat, et in sacras Agni hostias invisibili mutatione transcribat; ut sicut Verbum caro factum est, ita in Verbi substantiam benedicta oblationis natura proficiat, et quod prius fuerit alimonia, vita hic efficiatur æterna.” — *Pontificale Gemmëticense*, p. 263. This is also a Saxon pontifical.

For most of these extracts we are indebted to Lingard, Appendix N.

‡ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. iv. cap. 22.

§ “Cum sacrificium Dei victimæ salutaris offerret.” — *Ibid.* cap. 28.

|| *Sermo in die Paschali*, apud Wheloc, p. 470. 474.

¶ Cuminius, *Vita S. Columbæ*, cap. iv. et viii. (edit. Pinkerton, p. 29. et 32.)

in his life of the same saint — and both biographers, let us remember, flourished in the seventh century — says, that to celebrate mass is “*sacra consecrare mysteria*,” “*Christi corpus ex more conficere*.”* Such language as that of the quotations we have given, must, unless words have no meaning, be admitted to record a belief of the real presence in the eucharist. To attempt their refutation would betray little candour — the noblest quality of a writer. That the persuasion for which we contend was general among the Anglo-Saxons, may be inferred from a passage in the life of St. Odo, which, though containing a stupid miracle, conveys the sense of the times. Some clerks in the church of Canterbury, says Osbern, maintained that, after consecration, the elements remained just what they were before; that they were not the body and blood of Christ, but a figure or sign of the body and blood. Desiring to destroy the enormous wickedness of these men (*enormem perfidiam*), Odo wrought a miracle: at the fraction of the host, the blood flowed as if from a human body; and many were called to see it.† Though we reject the miracle with contempt, and do not believe that Odo would have practised any imposition on the people, — though the relation is the pure invention of that lying knave Osbern, it speaks the impression of his time as to the essence of the sacrament. In short, the whole tenour of Anglo-Saxon remains, from Bede to Dunstan, implies an established and unchanged belief of the real presence in the eucharist. Two or three passages, however, taken from the Saxon constitutions and from homilies of the archbishop Elfric, a disciple of St. Ethelwald, have been adduced by a host of protestant writers to prove the contrary. Thus, in the *Liber Canonum Ecclesiasticorum*: —

“The husel is the body of Christ, not corporeally but spiritually; not the body in which he suffered, but the body of

* Adamnanus, *Vita ejusdem*, lib. i. cap. 45. p. 93. et lib. iii. cap. 17. p. 171, 172. (eâdem edit.).

† Mendax Osbernus, in *Vita S. Odonis*.

which he spake when he consecrated the bread and wine in the eucharist the night before he suffered, saying of that consecrated bread, ‘*This is my body;*’ and of that consecrated wine, ‘*This is my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*’ Understand, therefore, that if Christ could change, before his passion, the bread into his body, and the wine into his blood, spiritually; so, daily, by the hands of the priest, may the bread and wine be consecrated into the spiritual body and blood.” *

Thus, also, Elfric says, that “the eucharistic differs from the natural body of Christ; and that, though the former is verily his body, it is so after a spiritual, not after a natural manner.” † At the first view, these passages would certainly convey the notion that the doctrine, in this respect, of our Saxon forefathers, was consistent with that of the present established church; and such was the meaning which we ourselves once attached to them. But a deeper examination of the question has satisfied us that our former impression was wrong. Though this is a subject which cannot be clearly understood by any reader who has not some knowledge of the interminable disputes on the *form* of the eucharist during the middle ages, from Paschasius Radbertus down to the thirteenth century, we will endeavour, in as few words as possible, to remove the difficulties with which it is connected. ‡

Early in the ninth century, some of the more subtle ecclesiastics began to renew a doubt, which had been agitated in former ages of the church — whether the body of Christ, present in the eucharist, was the identical body which had been born of the Virgin, and suffered on the cross. All parties equally admitted the real presence, and even transubstantiation; they agreed that, after the mysterious words of the priest, the elements, in virtue of a divine miracle, became Christ’s body and blood; but they differed widely as to the form. The most numerous, who therefore called them-

* Apud Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Sax.* p. 159, 160.

† *Sermo in die Paschali*, p. 7. edit. Lisle.

‡ Authorities, those before cited, with Lingard, *Antiquities*, Appendix N.

selves the orthodox party, maintained that though the body and blood of Christ were really and substantially present, yet that they were enveloped under the accidents of bread and wine, and could be discerned only by faith ; that, if the reality were there, the sign still remained. In this they followed the opinions of Paul the Deacon, who, before the time of Paschasius Radbertus, had these decisive words — “ Præscius Conditor noster infirmitatis nostræ, eâ potestate quâ cuncta fecit ex nihilo, et corpus sibi ex carne semper Virginis Mariæ, operante Sancto Spiritu, fabricavit ; panem et vinum aquâ mixtum, *manente propriâ specie*, in carnem et sanguinem suam, ad catholicam precem, ob reparationem nostram, Spiritûs Sancti sanctificatione convertit.” This language explicitly proves that transubstantiation was already the faith of the church. But even this doctrine did not suit others, who taught that the elements had not even the accidents of bread and wine ; that they were wholly, in their substance and essence, the true body of Christ ; that the sign was excluded by the reality. “ We believe and faithfully confess and hold,” says Haimo of Halberstadt, “ that the substance itself, namely, of the bread and the wine, is, through the operation of the divine virtue, *substantially converted into another substance*, that is, into real flesh and blood.” * But though these parties thus differed as to the hypothesis whether the accidents of the elements did or did not remain, both agreed not only that Christ’s body was really present, but that it was the same body which was born of the Virgin, which hung on the cross, and was raised the third day. To prove these dogmas, Paschasius entered the field of controversy. Like Paul the Deacon, he admitted that the accidents remained after consecration ; that there was a reality and a sign, and, consequently, a mystery : — “ Licet figura panis et vini hic sit, omnino nihil aliud quin caro Christi et san-

* These remarkable words should be given in the original : — “ Credimus itaque et fideliter confitemur et tenemus, quod substantia illa, panis scilicet et vini, per operationem divinæ virtutis *substantialiter convertatur in aliam substantiam*, id est, in carnem et sanguinem.” — *Haimo Halberstadensis* (apud Dacherium, Spicilegium, tom. ii.).

guis post consecrationem credenda sunt. Unde ipsa Veritas ad discipulos hæc inquit, *Caro mea est pro mundi vitâ.* Et, ut mirabilius loquar, non alia planè quàm quæ nata est de Mariâ, et passa in cruce, et resurrexit de sepulchro." By a commentator of the same period, this doctrine is still more explicitly taught,—“Sicut caro Christi quam assumpsit in utero virginali, verum corpus ejus est, et pro nostra salute occisum; ita panis quem Christus tradidit discipulis suis, omnibusque prædestinatis ad vitam æternam, et quem quotidie consecrant sacerdotes in ecclesiâ, cum virtute divinitatis quæ illum panem replet, verum corpus est Christi. *Nec sunt duo corpora, illa caro quam assumpsit, et iste panis; sed unum verum corpus Christi faciunt,* in tantum ut dum ille frangitur et comeditur, Christus immolatur et comeditur, et tamen vivus manet. Et sicut illud corpus quod in cruce positum pro nostra salute et redemptione est immolatum, ita quotidie ad nostram salutem et redemptionem, iste panis Deo offertur, qui licet panis videatur, corpus est Christi.”* Hence both the disciples of Haimo and those of Paschasius (or, if the reader will, Paulus Diaconus) agreed that the natural and eucharistic body of Christ were identical. But a third class of writers soon arose, who, while they admitted the real presence of Christ in the sacrament with full assurance of faith, contended that the two bodies were different. Of these an ingenious author of the times leads the way, by saying that the proposition of Paschasius, viz. the identity of the natural and eucharistic body,—of the one born from the Virgin, and of the one offered daily in the sacrifice,—was to him as astonishing as it was novel—novel, too, in the church of God:—“Istud planè fateor nunquam me prius audisse, vidisse, legisse.” How, he asked, *could* the body which was born, crucified, and raised a glorious body, be eaten by men? Hence, he concluded, that there were two bodies—the natural, which was inaccessible

* Mabillon, præfatio ad partem ii. Sæculi Quarti Actorum Sanctorum Ord. S. Ben. p. xvii.

and unchangeable; and the sacrificial, which might be received into the mouth, masticated, digested, &c.* He was followed by Rabanus Maurus, who asserted that the sacrament consisted of things visible and of things invisible: that the former, subject to the empire of the senses, partook of the ordinary qualities of matter; that the latter subsisted unchangeable and incorruptible; and that the opinion of Paschasius and others was erroneous: — “*Nam quidem nuper de ipso sacramento corporis et sanguinis Domini non rectè sentientes, dixerunt hoc ipsum corpus et sanguinem Domini, quod de Mariâ Virgine natum est.*” But we must here observe, that Rabanus, though he condemned the monstrous notion before mentioned, distinctly admitted transubstantiation: — “*Quis unquam crederet, quòd panis in carnem potuisset converti, vel vinum in sanguinem, nisi ipse Salvator diceret, qui panem et vinum creavit, et omnia ex nihilo fecit. Facilius est aliquid ex alio facere, quàm omnia ex nihilo creare.*” The meaning of Rabanus was amplified by Herigerus and others; by none more clearly than by an anonymus writer, whom Mabillon supposed to be Florus deacon of Lyons, and who was certainly contemporary, or nearly so, with the preceding. Speaking of Christ’s last supper with his disciples, the homilist says: — “The body of which he spake was one, that which he delivered, another. The body of which he spake was substantial; that which he delivered, mystical. The body of the Lord died, was buried, and ascended into heaven; that which he delivered under a mystery to the Apostles is daily consecrated by the hands of priests.” These words would lead us to conclude, that the author denied transubstantiation, did he not, in other passages, expressly declare his belief in that tenet. The sum of

* The learned reader will perceive that we cautiously abstain from one part of the subject embraced by the *Stercoranists*. We wonder how in such an age men durst write so. The truth, however, is, that there was much more freedom of opinion in the middle ages than we generally suppose. The doctrine of the *Stercoranists* is involved in one question, — “*An Eucharistia secessui sit obnoxia?*” Those who wish to know more of the subject, must wade through the disputes of the schools.

his reasoning is, that the true body of Christ, the mystical or eucharistic body, in contradistinction from the natural, subsists under the form of bread and wine.—A more celebrated impugner of Paschasius, in one respect, than any of the preceding, was Ratramnus, or Bertram, a monk of Corbie, in the ninth century. Charles the Bold could not behold with much patience the disputes of the people on this abstruse subject — some saying that the body and blood of Christ were visible in the eucharist without a veil ; others that the veil of the elements covered the essence ; some that it was the same, others that it was a different body from that which our Saviour had on earth. It was at the monarch's request, that Ratramnus endeavoured to fix the faith of the church on so momentous a subject. The monk immediately commenced his task, which he divided into two parts :—1. Is there in the eucharist any mystery or figure, or is it the veritable body and blood of our Redeemer? With Paschasius he answers in the affirmative. He commences by defining figure and truth. *Figure*, he observes, is an obscure manner of speaking ; asserting one thing, but conveying another. For example, in the Lord's prayer we call the eternal Word *bread* ; and Jesus Christ calls himself the *vine*, his disciples the *branches*. *Truth*, on the other hand, is the evident demonstration of a thing, which admits of no image, but which expresses a thing according to its natural existence. For example, when we say that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, that he suffered and died, we use neither veil nor figure, but the truth is manifested by the very terms which convey it ; but our language is figurative, when we say that Christ is bread, is a vine, and that his disciples are branches abiding in him ; for naturally the case is not so. Applying these definitions to the question at issue, he says, — If there be no figure in the eucharist, there is no mystery, and, consequently, no object of faith. Now, all admit that after consecration the elements, bread and wine, are changed into the body and blood of

Christ: but outwardly no change has taken place; it must, therefore, be internal. Hence there must be both the sign and the reality: externally is the form of bread; we see its colour, we taste its savour: internally, we believe that there is something far more precious, something divine, viz. the body of Christ, which we see, receive, eat, not through our corporeal senses, but through the eyes of faith. Wherefore, this bread and this wine are *spiritually* or *figuratively* the body and blood of Christ; yet, after the mystical consecration they are no more bread and wine, but in truth that body and blood. This reasoning he extends through several pages, all evidently to prove that, as the change is not outward, or visible to the eyes, and that as, consequently, it must be inward or invisible, that change cannot be corporeal, but spiritual; and that, though the substance be transformed, it is hidden under the veil or figure of bread and wine. In many places, he is evidently so fearful of being misunderstood — and this is worthy of remark, for he has been claimed by protestants — of being supposed to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation, that he repeats himself; distinctly affirming that the elements no longer remain in substance; that, though visible as such to the senses, they are, in reality, quite another thing, viz. the body and blood of Christ. He concludes this first part of his subject by emphatically saying: — “Ex his omnibus quæ sunt hactenus dicta, monstratum est quod corpus et sanguis Christi, quæ fidelium ore in ecclesiâ percipiuntur, figuræ sunt secundum speciem visibilem; at vero secundum invisibilem substantiam, id est, divini potentiam Verbi, vere corpus et sanguis Christi existunt; unde secundum visibilem creaturam corpus pascunt; juxta vero potentioris virtutem substantiæ fidelium mentes et pascunt et sanctificant.” — 2. But is this transubstantiated body the same that was born, and suffered and died? Here again Ratramnus appeals to the evidence of the senses. The natural body and the eucharistic are different; because the one was visible and

tangible, the other is invisible and impalpable ; because the former appeared to be what it really was, while the latter appears to be what it is not. The body of Christ was incorrupt ; but the species under which the faithful receive that body in the eucharist quickly decay : hence to assert that the two are identical, must be absurd, and contrary to the sentiment of the church, which prays that we may, in a future state, see, without veil or figure, that which in this state of being is imaged or shadowed under sacramental forms.*

We have dwelt the longer on the work of Ratramnus, as it was evidently followed, always as to its spirit, generally in its very words, by Elfric. How, it may be asked, came an isolated monk (as Elfric originally was) acquainted with the subtle disputes of the continental theologians ? The answer is ready : the abbots of Fleury and Corbie, in consequence of an application of St. Ethelwold, sent some of their monks to teach in the monasteries of Abingdon and Winchester, in both which Elfric was educated. Nearly one half of his sermon on the sacrifice of the mass consists of extracts from the treatise of Ratramnus, whose opinions he perfectly espouses. Hence it is that he labours to impress on the minds of his hearers the difference between the natural and the eucharistic body of Christ, between that which suffered on the cross, and that which is daily consecrated by the priest. The body of Christ, he observes, is really present in the sacrament, yet it is not visible to the senses ; hence it is invisibly concealed under the elemental forms of bread and wine. The change of these elements into Christ's body and blood is not visibly effected ; it is therefore produced invisibly, or, as he terms it, *spiritually*, in contradistinction to *cor-*

* Paschasius Radbertus, de Corpore et Sanguine Christi (apud Martene et Durand, Amplissima Collectio, tom. ix. p. 373, &c.). Rabanus Maurus, de Sacris Ordinibus, lib. vii. (in Bibliotheca Patrum, Sæculum ix.). Ratramnus, De Eucharistia, passim (apud Dacherium Spicilegium, tom. xii.). Mabillon, Acta Sanctorum Ord. S. Ben. Præfatio ad Partem ii. Sæculi iv. Cellier, Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques, tom. xix. p. 37, &c. p. 136, &c. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Ang. Sax., tom. iii. p. 440. Lingard, Antiquities, Appendix N.

poreally. Both he and Ratramnus use the words *naturaliter* and *spiritualiter*, as opposite to each other; while, in more modern times, *naturaliter* and *sacramentaliter* are preferred — the one as denoting an unchangeable or bodily, the other an eucharistic or spiritual mode of existence. If the reader, with the preceding explanation before him, will diligently weigh every sentence in the homily of Elfric, he will not read one to which Ratramnus would not have subscribed, not one which Ratramnus would not have written, nor one which is not virtually, often verbally, involved in what he has written. Elfric, however, seems to have been alone among the Anglo-Saxons in this view of the subject; for all the other writers of his country evidently regard the natural and eucharistic body of Christ as perfectly identical. We will not pursue it farther. We repeat our settled conviction that the doctrine of transubstantiation was universally received by the Anglo-Saxons. Yet Usher and Lisle, and Wheloch, and Inett, and Henry, and a host besides, have adopted Ratramnus, consequently Elfric, as a precursor of the Reformation. Hear one of the last:—

“ It is certain that the transubstantiation of the eucharist was not the established or the universal belief of the Anglo-Saxons. In a MS. of the Saxon ecclesiastical constitutions, it is declared: ‘ The husel (the sacrament) is Christ’s body, *not bodily*, but *spiritually*; not the body in which he suffered, but the body about which he spake when he blessed the loaf and wine.’ ” *

We believe in transubstantiation just as much as Mr. Turner — just as much as in the incarnation of Vishnu; but in two things, we hope, we differ from him — in freedom from prejudice, and in making no sweeping assertions without a previous careful examination, or without stating the grounds on which such assertions are founded. The historian’s duty is clear: he should record facts just as he finds them; not distort them — whether through prejudice or ignorance is immaterial

* Turner, *Anglo-Saxons*, iii. 499.

-- to support a system, however excellent that system may be.*

That the communion was administered in both kinds is indisputable, both from the case of St. Guthlake †, from various passages in the homilies and canons, where the use of the cup is distinctly mentioned or implied, and from the testimony of Arnulfus bishop of Rochester, whose words imply that the use of the cup was not discontinued even so low as the twelfth century. This fact has been abundantly proved by Mabillon, to whose dissertation we refer the inquisitive reader. ‡

III. The existence of *penance* as a sacrament, appears perpetually. But penance supposes confession, which we find practised from the earliest period in the Saxon church. Thus St. Cuthbert is represented as going from place to place, to preach and hear the confessions of the people. In the penitential of Egbert, we read, "The time of duty comes every twelve months, when every man shall speak to his confessor, and avow to God and his confessor all the sins he has committed;" and in a Saxon homily, "Truly, no man will obtain forgiveness of his sins from God, unless he confess to some of God's ministers, and do penance according to his judgment." Minute are the directions given to the priest, to guide him while he sits in the tribunal of penance; and in the work of Egbert we find various penalties to be imposed, according to the comparative enormity of the offence, differing generally in fasting from a few days to as many years, sometimes the whole life. The period, however, might be shortened by benefactions to the church and to the poor; for a pecuniary compensation was admitted to atone for crimes against society—why should not the same means satisfy the demands of offended religion? It is singular to see the abuses to which these dispensations or indulgences gave rise. But the evil was progressive:—

* Elfrici Homilia de Sacrif. Turner, ubi suprâ. Alford, Annales, iii. 440. Lingard, ubi suprâ.

† See page 221. of the present vol.

‡ Mabillon, Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Præfatio ad Partem i. Sæc. iii. p. 53, &c.

“ This indulgence, which had originally been confined to the dying, was claimed, with an equal appearance of justice, by the sick and the infirm, and was at length extended to all whose constitutions or employments were incompatible with the rigour of a long and severe fast. By the rich it was accepted with gratitude ; but to the poor it offered an illusory boon, which only aggravated the hardships of their condition. To remove the invidious distinction, a new species of commutation was adopted. Archbishop Egbert, founding his decision on the authority of Theodore, intrusted it to the prudence of the confessor, to enjoin, when the penitent pleaded infirmity or inability, a real equivalent in prayers or money. Thus, a new system of canonical arithmetic was established, and the fast of a day was taxed at a silver penny for the rich, or of fifty paternosters for the illiterate, and fifty psalms for the learned. That these compensations would accelerate the decline of the primitive fervour, was foreseen and lamented by the bishops ; and the fathers of the council of Cloves-hoe made a vigorous but fruitless attempt to uphold the ancient discipline. “ It is necessary,” they observe to the Saxon clergy, “ that the enjoyment of forbidden pleasures should be punished by the subtraction of lawful gratifications. Alms and prayers are undoubtedly useful ; but they were designed to be the auxiliaries, not the substitutes, of fasting.” The torrent, however, was resistless ; and the condemned indulgences were gradually sanctioned, first by the silence, afterwards by the approbation, of their accusers. There was another, and a more singular innovation, which equally provoked, and equally survived, their censure. Among a powerful and turbulent nobility, it was not difficult to discern men whose offences were so numerous, that, to expiate them according to the letter of the canons, would require a greater number of years than could possibly fall to the lot of any individual. Sinners of this description were admonished to distrust so precarious a resource, to solicit the assistance of their friends, and to relieve their own insolvency by the vicarious payments of others. In obedience to this advice, they recommended themselves to the prayers of those who were distinguished by the austerity and sanctity of their lives, endeavoured, by numerous benefits, to purchase the gratitude of the monks and clergy ; and, by procuring their names to be enrolled among the members of the more celebrated monasteries, indulged in the hope of partaking in the merit of the good acts performed by these societies. But it was not long before a system, which offered so much accommodation to human weakness, received considerable improvements ; and men were willing to persuade themselves that they might atone for their crimes, by substituting in the place of their own, the

austerities of mercenary penitents. It was in vain that the council of Cloves-hoe thundered its anathemas against their disobedience; the new doctrine was supported by the wishes and the practice of the opulent; and its toleration was at length extorted, on the condition that the sinner should undergo, in person, a part at least of the penance. The thane who determined to embrace the expedient, was commanded to lay aside his arms, to clothe himself in woollen or sack-cloth, to walk barefoot, to carry in his hand the staff of a pilgrim, to maintain a certain number of poor, to watch during the night in the church, and, when he slept, to repose on the ground. At his summons, his friends and dependants assembled at his castle; they also assumed the garb of penitence; their food was confined to bread, herbs, and water; and these austerities were continued till the aggregate amount of their fasts equalled the number specified by the canons. Thus, with the assistance of one hundred and twenty associates, an opulent prince might, in the short space of three days, discharge the penance of a whole year. But he was admonished that it was a doubtful and dangerous experiment; and that, if he hoped to appease the anger of the Almighty, he must sanctify his repentance by true contrition of heart, by frequent donations to the poor, and by fervent prayer. How long this practice was tolerated, I am ignorant; but I have met with no instance of it posterior to the reign of Edgar.*

The honesty with which the reverend author relates the origin and progress of this abuse will not disarm the resentment of posterity at ecclesiastics, who could be thus criminally condescending, who could thus directly encourage vice, that they might profit by it. No terms are sufficiently strong to express the execration due to such shameless complicity, such unblushing avarice.†

IV., V., VI., VII. The three preceding sacraments were thus "generally necessary to salvation." "Three holy things," says a Saxon homily, "has God appointed for the purification of men. The first is baptism; the second, the holy communion; the third, penance, with a cessation from evil deeds, and the practice of good works." Of four other sacraments, — confirmation,

* Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 204.

† Wilkins, *Concilia*, tom. i. p. 98, 99, 115, 140, 237, 238. Lingard, *ubi supra*.

holy orders, marriage, extreme unction, — which were equally received in the Anglo-Saxon church, we know not that we have any thing to say likely to interest our readers. On prayers for the dead, however, we may pause a moment. As the Saxons, like all other nations in common with the church universal, believed in the middle state, they also believed that the souls in purgatory were helped by the prayers of the surviving faithful. Hence it was incumbent on every one to pray for the soul of his departed friend or kinsman. At this period, that most damnable abuse, private masses—an abuse fully equal to penance by deputy, since it opens the kingdom of heaven to the rich preferably to the poor*, do not appear to have existed in this country, nor, indeed, in any other country, before the ninth century. That all after their death might be sure of being aided by such prayers, guilds, or confraternities, were formed, every individual of which was bound to pray for every deceased brother. This people had guilds of different kinds; in every populous district such social ramifications were to be found, some for the common defence, some for the prosecution of offenders, many for the purpose of any particular trade or branch of industry. In fact, our fast-decaying corporations, consisting usually of so many companies of trades, are lineal descendants from the Saxon policy—a policy once admirable, even necessary, now worse than useless, since it favours the interests of the few at the expense of the many. We should never, however, have supposed, that clubs would be formed for the benefit of the soul, were not the fact so well attested. The rules of one established at Atterbury may convey a good idea of the rest:—

“ If any one belonging to our association chance to die, each member shall pay one penny for the good of his soul, before the body be laid in the grave. If he neglect it, he shall be

* Even now, in England, all who can afford, engage the priest to say private masses for their deceased friends. Those who cannot afford, have the consolation of believing that the souls of those friends must burn until eternal justice is satisfied. Is this making no distinction between the rich and the poor? A distinction, if Scripture be true, there will doubtless be; but not in favour of Divines.

fixed in a triple sum. If any of us fall sick within sixty miles, we engage to find fifteen men who may bring him home ; but, if he die first, we will send thirty men to convey him to the place in which he desired to be buried. If he die in the neighbourhood, the steward shall enquire where he is to be interred, and shall summon as many members as he can, to assemble, attend the corpse in an honourable manner, carry it to the minster, and pray devoutly for the soul. Let us act in this manner, and we shall truly perform the duty of our confraternity. This will be honourable to us both before God and man : for we know not who among us may die first ; but we believe that, with the blessing of God, this agreement will profit us all, if it be rightly observed."

Our present benefit societies are the legitimate offspring of these guilds.*

* *Monasticon Anglicanum*, tom.i. p. 278. *Epistolæ S. Bonifacii*, 74. 95, &c. *Bede, Vita S. Cuthberti*, p. 228. *Lingard, Antiquities*, p. 215.

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